

ISOBEL'S
BETWEEN TIMES



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ISOBEL'S BETWEEN TIMES.

BY MRS. NATHANIEL CONKLIN.

(JENNIE M. DRINKWATER.)

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ROBERT CARTER & BROTHERS.

ISOBEL'S BETWEEN TIMES

MRS. NATHANIEL CONKLIN

(JENNIE M. DRINKWATER)

"My times are in Thy hand."—DAVID.

"Girls fain would know the end of every thing."—MRS. BROWNING.

"God, the best maker of marriages, bless you."—SHAKESPEARE.

"The woof of life is dark, but it is shot with a warp of gold."—F. W. ROBERTSON.



NEW YORK

ROBERT CARTER AND BROTHERS

BROADWAY

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ISOBEL'S BETWEEN TIMES.



I.

ISOBEL.

"I do not see what I was made as I am, for," exclaimed the girl at the window, in one of her tones of despairing patience.

She had a great many tones of despairing patience.

"In my opinion you are very prettily made," complimented the placid and sincere old lady with the yards of white work at one of the other windows.

The afternoon sun streamed in at the four long windows. Madame's windows were the sunniest that looked out upon the square. The bare floor was illuminated: even the stone steps of the narrow passage caught the glow through the open doorway; the girl's hair shone like gold. In her white dress, with the knot of narrow rose-color at her throat and the faint rose-color in her cheeks, to the

eyes that were watching her, she was indeed "prettily made." To herself, with her gray eyes, dark lashes, and darker eyebrows, she was not pretty at all. When she uttered her complaint her physical self was least in her thoughts; she was wondering why her disposition, her inclinations, her impulses, why her very best and her very worst self should be such as it was, so unfitted to her circumstances. "I do not see what I was made at all for—then," she burst out, her despair breaking into open rebellion.

"Now you are wicked!" rebuked the placid voice, with about the degree of sternness with which she would have reproached her pet canary.

"You tell me that fifty times a day," with a shrug of careless impatience.

"Because it is true fifty times a day! You are the most ungrateful girl I ever knew; you grow worse every day."

"Because things grow worse every day—things outside of me and inside of me. Tell me," turning with sharp demand, "what one thing have I ever had that other girls have?"

The rebukeful, caressing voice was silent. Isobel usually extinguished her; she usually extinguished every one who opposed her. "I cannot answer

her," Madame had bewailed to her mother; "it seems so reasonable when she talks."

Madame chirped to her canary, then bent her pretty lace head over her embroidery again. Isobel turned to the window, leaning back against the folded inside blinds.

The conversation was usually in snatches. Another of Isobel's grievances was that Madame grew stupid by the day.

Isobel Kellinger *was* "prettily made;" that had been an acknowledged fact a great many years, if any fact at twenty, can have been known a great many years. The knowledge of it and the truth of it had made no difference to her all her life. She supposed it never would make a difference; it had never made her mother love her, or brought her father to school as often as once a year. It was two years now since she had seen him, and in all that time he had written exactly three letters; the latest, in her pocket, being the longest, and that was three pages. It is true her own letters did not encourage frequent or long replies; how could she write freely to some one she did not know?

No; being pretty, and quick at her lessons, had made no difference to her father and mother; they had not cared for her gold medal and two silver

ones ; nothing in her had made a difference to them ; how could she but lament the way she was made ?

“There are fathers enough like *him*,” she had overheard Madame Mowbray say to Mademoiselle Abadie, “but *she’s* unnatural.”

For seventeen years Isobel Kellinger had been left to herself at a small boarding-school in the suburbs of Havre ; her father had had a good report of the management of the girls from another American sea-captain, who had three daughters in the school ; and her mother had brought her, a silent, pale child, before she had learned to speak her mother tongue. Her father had made but one stipulation : “Teach her everything you teach the other girls, only she must know English. She is a Yankee girl, and I wont have her Frenchified ; put her in charge of an English woman ; the day she doesn’t speak better English than French I shall take her away.”

The vacations were spent in Havre with Madame Mowbray, an elderly English widow, whose husband Captain Kellinger had known. There were no children at Madame’s. The vacations were the dolefullest parts of the doleful year.

The child knew her school life was unsatisfying

because of the continual something in herself that demanded something better.

“It is very queer,” Madame had observed to Mademoiselle, “but with all his inattention, he seems to own the child more than she does. She always hesitates when I propose any new thing, and says, ‘I must ask her father.’ I can hardly believe she is the poor little forlorn thing’s mother. But she is named Isobel, after her.”

The window at which Isobel stood overlooked the great, paved square; opposite was the garden where the people were thronging, and the band playing martial music. Madame supposed she had stationed herself there because of the people and the music, as she had been accustomed to do during all her childish and girlish days; in reality she was standing because it was less disagreeable than sitting; she liked the square because it was broader than the narrow streets at each side of it; she liked almost all the few things that she did like, because they were less disagreeable than some other things: Madame was less disagreeable than Mademoiselle, France less disagreeable than America, her father less disagreeable than Mademoiselle’s father, who took snuff and made queer little bows to the pupils.

There was no degree of comparison in regard to the one being she loved with all the fervor and enthusiasm of her solitary, shut-up heart—she did not love or admire her beautiful gay mother—she simply worshipped her. Her absorbing grief was that this love was not returned; mamma kissed her when she came, brought her own pretty dresses to be made over for her, wrote long descriptive letters from every port, beginning, “My darling child,” and ending, “Your loving mamma,” but there it ended. “Mamma loved Lucy, but Lucy died;” how often this sad refrain rang in Isobel’s ears since she had spoken the words to Perez Dekker. She had never put the agony of it into words before. “I think she would rather I had died and Lucy had lived. I asked her one day, and she kissed me and pushed me away from her. Lucy was seven when she died and I was fourteen. I was happy at school after she brought my little sister. Lucy was born in Madras, and mamma brought her to Madame; and when she was three years old she came to school and stayed with me. I taught her to speak English. Papa said I was never to speak French to her. All I wanted was my little sister and the old garden. But Lucy died after three days of illness, while mamma

Isobel's Between Times

was in Peru; and all I had to show her when she came back was Lucy's lovely photograph and her grave. I thought mamma would die. And papa wept and covered his face and was very kind to me that day, and called me his only little daughter. Now Mademoiselle has sold the garden for building lots, and it is not country any longer. That is the way it has been with everything. My dove died, and my parrot; the girl at school that I liked best had an English home and had to go to it; she always said she would write to me to come, but she never has; she writes, but she does not write of my coming. And now they are coming next year to decide what is to be done with me, because I am through school. I cannot do anything with myself, they must do something with me. Mademoiselle wishes me to stay and become the English governess, but papa was not pleased when I asked him. I shall die if I have to go to your strange country among your strange people."

She was repeating her words now to herself, and looking up into the strange eyes that had grown sympathetic as he listened. All he said to comfort her was: "Your grandfather is anxious to see you; he will be very kind to you. He has pink cheeks and white hair, and is as handsome as a picture."

“ But she shrank from such comfort; her grandfather to her was her father intensified. Perez Dekker—what an odd name it was—had answered her rapid, eager gestures with such coolness and seeming reservation that she had become chilled, and had broken off with an exclamation of hopelessness; and he had looked at her and said nothing. Since that day last summer America had seemed more dreadful than ever.

He had come once again to say good-bye. His business was finished and he would sail for America the next day. Had she any message to send?

“ Yes,” she exclaimed, passionately, flushing with many emotions, “tell them they have never written to me or sent any word to me before, and I hate them all for leaving a lonely little girl to herself for so many years, and I will never go to them unless my father compels me. I think I would rather sink into the bottom of the sea.”

“ I will deliver it word for word,” he said, seriously, “but I am not one of ‘them.’ I live opposite, and I never heard of you until the night before I came away, and then your grandfather sent for me.”

“ I am not glad you came. You have not told me anything, or done me any good.”

“You shall not say that when I come here again.”

She made no reply; she did not care for him to come again. He was one of the strangers of that strange land. Had he been of her own kin he would have been a stranger still.

A crash of music, and then a pause; Isobel was not aware of either.

“I wonder what they would have done with Lucy?”

The utterance startled her; she did not know that she had spoken.

“I wish you were like other girls. Most girls love to look forward. I always did.”

“I do not wish to become like other girls; I have never seen my ideal girl.”

“You have that to look forward to.”

“I do not believe that she exists—outside of a book.”

“She can exist in you,” said Madame, with more comprehension of her mood than usual.

Isobel laughed and gave her shoulders a careless shrug; Perez Dekker, among other things, had told her relatives that the French-American girl was all gestures and exclamations.

“Looking forward was my delight when I was

a girl," remarked the placid voice; but Madame's eyes were slightly disturbed.

"To what? A cat and a canary, and darning stockings and making lace?"

"I have had some other things in between; my between times have been very nice," half sighed Madame, with a gentle, reminiscent smile.

"I never have between times," cried Isobel, with all the bitterness of her twenty years of neglect.

Her fingers were pressing that letter in her pocket; her father had written to her from New York, that he expected to sail for Liverpool. Her mother would come for her, and they would all together talk over the plans for her future. He could no longer afford even the few francs Madame asked weekly for her board; he had taken good care of her twenty years; many girls, at her age, especially American girls, supported themselves. He believed that she was a true Yankee girl, in spite of her foreign training; she ought to be, with her long line of American ancestry.

Madame had hinted that she was visionary and dissatisfied; a little hard practical life would cure her of that. His present plan was to send her to her grandfather, her mother's father; Perez Dekker had brought the report that she "hated" her

relations: it was fully time that she was cured of such nonsense. Her mother had a revelation to make—now that she was old enough to hear it—and she must be prepared to take it without hysterics or any such nonsense. And then he was her affectionate father, John S. Kellinger.

The horror of that “revelation” was with her day and night. Last night she had dreamed that it was that she was to be a fish-woman, and she had wakened to laugh and then to have the dread return in full force—for it must be something worse.

If her mother had only written it and not left it unspoken for her to be burdened by it—the dread of it might be worse than the thing itself. When the dread became overpowering, she fell on her knees and repeated “Notre Père.”

“Our Father” was the only prayer she had ever prayed: it was a charm to ward off evil more than a prayer. What had any of the petitions to do with the “revelation”? “Give us this day our daily bread”—did that touch it?

“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven:” had that anything to do with it?

“For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory;” surely her trouble was not in his kingdom, or his power, or his glory.

But it was all the prayer she had ever learned, and it was more familiar in French than English, because the girls always repeated it with bowed heads at the opening of every morning session.

She had not dared read the letter to Madame; it would be putting the dreadful thing into words; it would be more real and near if they should speak of it together.

It could not be worse than when Lucy died in her arms alone, and that had not killed her; she wished it had—she wanted to go with Lucy, and then she would not have to go through this—alone. She always had to go through everything alone.

She would have to go to America alone. There was no one there she knew excepting Mr. Dekker, and she had seen him but twice, and did not care to see him again. He was slow and silent, and had such stern black eyes, and such heavy black eyebrows that they hid his eyes—all but the sharp light of them: so much black hair, too, piled up on his head and hanging down behind his ears. If American professors were all like that—but Longfellow was not.

Her two enthusiasms were her mother,—her

beautiful, bright, handsomely dressed mother, and the American poet, Longfellow.

The one thing that drew her to Perez Dekker was that he had once seen Longfellow in a book store in Boston.

Had he spoken to him? Or touched him?

No, nor had he heard him speak.

The band was playing again. A great wave of home-sickness rolled over her; she staggered backward and held out her hand blindly; she was home-sick for the home she had never had. This home was also an "ideal."

The girls were full of enthusiasm about their homes. The three American girls were wild to go home when their father came for them, and Harriet Menzies had written once from London, to say that home was dearer and sweeter than she had ever dreamed.

Last year her nearest approach to being at home was a week on board the ship at Hamburg, and the year before she had travelled with her mother in Germany and Switzerland.

She had forgotten these two times when she said that she never had "between times."

"O, mamma," she had pleaded with tears, "if I

might only go with you sailing everywhere, and having gay times with you."

The same hurried response she had heard before: "You know that is impossible."

But she could never understand how it was "impossible."

How could her father be too poor when her mother had so many handsome dresses, and diamonds on her fingers and in her ears?

She had told her mother that she was as beautiful as Madame Recamier and as fascinating as Madame de Stael.

"I shall always have one admirer, even when I am old," was the pleased and laughing reply.

"The girls said you must be my stepmother; that you were too young to be my mother," said Isobel proudly, and I told them you were my *own* mother."

"You do not look like me, Bel."

"I would scorn to spoil you by being a poor imitation. Am I all like papa?"

"No, you are not at all like papa."

Isobel brought herself back from the shadow of the blindness and attempted to listen to the music; she had heard her mother play the air on the old piano at school. The home-sickness swept over her

again. It was almost worse than the dreaded revelation.

“Bel, how can you stand there and be so idle?”

“Is thinking idleness?” she retorted, saucily.

“The worst kind, if the thoughts are folly,” said Madame, wisely.

“My thoughts are always folly—they never come to any good,” muttered Isobel.

Oftentimes her attitude was listlessness itself, but it was not that she was idle or afraid of hard work or hard study.

Mademoiselle had spoken to her father about retaining her as a teacher: “In all my teaching I never had a young lady so original,” she said.

Bel smiled at the remark, and the expressive gesture that accompanied it; she said to herself that Mademoiselle had not the least idea what “original” signified.

“You have made her English, not American,” was the growling response. “I shall have to send her to America for that.”

What else could Monsieur expect with English and French teachers, and with Madame, who had been English three hundred years?

“I have as good as I expected, Mademoiselle; the girl will pass; you have not wasted my money.”

"The girl will pass!" It was the single word of commendation she had ever heard from her father's lips.

When a child, one day, she had dropped her head in Madame's lap with one of her outbursts of tears, "O Madame, *praise* me."

"Praise is bad for little girls," reproved Madame.

"I like bad things, then," she murmured, gathering her forlorn little self together.

She must be "spoiled," because they all said so ; but too much praise, or too much tenderness had not done it. Perhaps she had done it herself by having her own way whenever she could—sometimes even by falsehood or deceit. Her gray eyes looked so clear and true, as true as if no lie had ever shadowed them. But she was not true, she deceived every one who had a right to control her ; she had deceived about lessons and walks and books ; how beside could she have her own way ?

"Bel, is Mr. Dekker the only American face you know ?"

"Papa and mamma."

"Oh, yes, of course."

And that small exquisite oil painting—that lovely face on ivory ! She had stolen it—she had stolen it with an overflowing heart, not caring

for the consequences. One day, while on ship-board for a week in Havre, in looking through her father's desk, in a tiny drawer, she had discovered this treasure: the face of a girl about her own age, with large gray eyes, and the sweetest mouth, and sunniest hair. Coming in suddenly her mother had snatched it from her, and angrily asked what she was meddling for?

"Tell me who it is! Just tell me who it is," she pleaded eagerly, pressing it to her lips.

"No one you ever heard of."

"Does she belong to papa?"

"She does not belong to any one—she is dead," said Mrs. Kellinger, ungraciously.

"Did you know her?"

"She was my cousin; she has been dead years."

"What was her name?"

"Her name was Hope Devoe," replied Mrs. Kellinger, dropping it in Isobel's lap.

"Why does papa have her? Why do not you?"

"I did not know your father had it."

"If he would *only* give it to me. I do not dare ask him; will you ask him, mamma?"

"No. Put it away—shut that drawer. I do not believe that he remembers that he has it."

"Did she do some dreadful thing that you have

to hide it?" She was still pressing it fondly between her palms. As she spoke she lifted it and laid the face close to her cheek. She had found her ideal girl at last. Why was it that the face was not strange? Had she ever seen her in a crowd? Had she dreamed of her?

"How tiresome you are, to-day! You are always raving about something. It is very school-girlish to fall in love with a picture."

"I *am* in love with it," Isobel returned. "Mamma, she is as pretty as you are."

"Put it in the drawer. I want to see you put it in the drawer."

"You do not care for it—you hate it, and papa has forgotten it; it does not belong to anybody."

"It will some day—when I die. Why do you not drop it, as I tell you?"

"I cannot," touching it again with her lips. "I want it. May I have it? May I ask papa?"

"Yes, if you choose to make him angry."

"You know I will not choose that," Isobel answered, sorrowfully.

The painting was laid away in the drawer, but that evening, while her father and mother were calling upon a friend, the desk was opened,

the secret drawer pulled out, and the lovely face again pressed to Isobel's lips and cheek.

This time she could not let it go. She slipped it into her pocket, and there it stayed. More than one night she had fallen asleep with it pressed between her cheek and the pillow.

"I want some one like her," she said often. "O Hope Devoe, what made you die?"

That happened three years ago. The theft had not been discovered. How could it be, when her father did not care for it, and her mother hated it?

"Is Devoe an English name?" questioned Isobel.

"De Voe! I never heard it."

But Madame had heard so few things that her questioner was not surprised.

The band had ceased. The people were thronging the streets. Still she lingered at the window. While she was waiting she might as well be standing at that window as doing any other thing.

The days had been endless since that letter came.

"Bel, what are you doing?" came sharply from the lips that just then were closed over a bit of worsted.

"Looking," said undisturbed Bel.

"I shouldn't think you could see anything new out of that window, if you should stand there a hundred years."

At that moment she was seeing something new.

A short gentleman, with a sea-browned and sun-burned face, a foreigner evidently, not an Englishman. He must be an American, and more than probably a sea-captain. He had her father's tread, his broad shoulders, his slim waist that did not seem to belong to the shoulders. The breath of the ocean was about him. He was accompanied by two oddly dressed girls; the younger was holding his hand, the elder with her observant manner, seemed to be gathering material for her note book. They must be her father's countrymen, the kind of people she would jog against in New York.

They went on talking eagerly and gazing around until they had left the square and turned into the narrow street at the right. The gentleman stopped before the church door and pointed down toward the wharves; the girls listened and looked. He took a bundle from the elder girl and walked on, leaving them standing together before the church.

After a moment they entered the church to-

gether. She felt inclined to follow them to listen to their remarks. The older girl was about her own age, and the younger was as old as Lucy would have been by this time. How strange to think of herself and Lucy sauntering around with their father!

What would their American eyes think of the ancient buildings—America was so new—of the burning candles, the figures kneeling on the pavement, the bowed heads in the confessional boxes?

Would America be as strange to her as this land must be to these two girls? In America would she meet soldiers and Custom House officers in the street? If she should walk out in New York and stray out into the country, as she had yesterday in the dusk with Madame, would she come to low cottages thatched with straw; through the open doors would she see the fathers and mothers eating their evening meal of fruit and bread, or sitting at the doors talking and smoking as they watched the children at play, dark-eyed little children with caps or black nets upon their heads?

There must be green trees and clover fields outside of New York. Would she find anything like the blue Seine, covered with sloops, and the hills of Normandy opposite, in the mist? Was the

Hudson like it—and what was opposite, like her hills?

Madame's English friends sang *Gentle Annie* and *Old Dog Tray*; even if these songs were English, she might hear them in America. Those girls could tell her about America: perhaps they knew a girl named Devoe; perhaps they knew Perez Dekker, or her grandfather.

“Bel!” with an impatient intonation.

Bel's frown was equally impatient; it was her only reply.

The room, the sunshine, the artificial flowers, the old lady's head, her tones and rebukes were all like home to her; but what was “home” like? Would those girls be happy in these rooms? Would they be patient and still, and take what came next? Would they want to know what to-morrow held for them? Would they be brave, if they had to hear some dreadful thing?

How would they feel if they had the loveliest dream of a mother, and were always awaking to find her neither real nor near?

What report had Perez Dekker taken of her? How could they be “kind” to her when they find out all she was? Would she ever have to deceive her grandfather?

Perez Dekker had written a description of her to his sister; but it was years before Isobel's eyes fell upon it; Jue Dekker had read it to her old grandfather.

“She is a plump little creature, perhaps more human than some people may care to manage; eyes gray and round, like some children's you have seen; they lift themselves to you and do not fall until something fills them too full. Eye-lashes and eyebrows wonderfully dark in contrast to the mass of hair that is not gold, or brown, or red; her cheeks have no color until she speaks, and then it comes faintly and then brightly; her words tumble over each other as if impatient of the restraint of utterance. So much for what your ladies care to know; as for the rest, she's a poor throbbing little soul in bondage, doing her worst while she longs to do her best; as bitter as a girl can be, suffering under some wrong that she dimly comprehends; angry with all the world for keeping her out of her inheritance.

“Her tones, her resistances, her hands outstretched in pleading, or in self-defence, her defiance, and her little conciliatory ways, all speak in the same strain: “There is something for me somewhere, and nobody gives it to me.”

The girl would not have understood this any more than she understood herself; she only knew that she was wretched, and nobody cared, that something hard was coming to her, and there was no one to make it easier. Mademoiselle had spoken of the dear Lord once when her little sister died, but where was he?

“Bel, your blue muslin needs to be darned.”

If she were choking to death that blue muslin would need to be darned all the same; she tossed her hair back with an impatient exclamation, and then laughed.

It struck Madame, obtuse as she was, that the laugh was rather dreary; but she took the blue muslin and darned the long criss-cross rent with many exquisite stitches; darning was one of Madame's accomplishments, and by dint of bribing, scolding and coaxing, Bel had become a proficient in the same housewifely art.

Bel's fingers had been educated more fully than her heart or her intellect.

That afternoon, pretty Lizette, on the floor below, came up the stone steps with a letter for Miss Isobel Kellinger. Bel snatched it, tore it open, and ran to her own room; but there was no need of secrecy in perusing the one small sheet, or in hold-

ing herself tightly together, to brace herself for what it might contain.

The stay in Liverpool might be protracted. Her father had lost his command of the American ship. He was seeking other employment; if he could not find that he would be forced to take a mate's berth. He had lost in an unfortunate speculation the small earnings of his many years upon the ocean; he was a poor man, and his daughter was a poor girl; she must hold herself in readiness to go to America as soon as affairs were more settled, and then it was signed, "Your loving mamma, ISOBEL KELLINGER."

Was *this* what she had dreaded night and day? Was this *all*? The relief was so great that she burst into hysterical tears; then hugged herself with both arms and laughed. "I am to stay here and wait—and then go to America."

"Then this is one of your between times," said Madame encouragingly.

She would like to thank the dear Lord if she knew how. This was *all*: that her father was poor, that she was poor; she had always felt poor, that was nothing new or sad. Her wardrobe had been supplied with shabby dresses for which her mother had no use; she had learned un-

der Madame's tuition to make them over for herself, and her few francs of spending money had been hoarded like so much precious gold; her question in purchasing had never been, "Do I need it?" Instead she had asked: "How can I do without it?" And this rigid economy had extended to the minutest detail of her dress. Madame prided herself upon the darns in her stockings, declaring that not a maiden in France could boast as many.

Ten minutes later, with the letter in her hand, the radiant girl danced into Madame's presence, singing:

"I'm too happy,—I'm too happy—
I'm too happy for anything."

"Good news?" asked Madame, not at all startled, for the girl's moods were as many as the hours of the day.

II.

OVER THE SEA.

IF Isobel had stolen into that long apartment that rainy afternoon of a chilly August day, and found the fire alone by itself, with old Malt curled up on the hearth-rug, blinking at the flames, with not a sound beside the sound of the tall French clock on the mantel, what would she have guessed about the occupant or occupants of the room?

There must be two, there might be more. Who made this room a home? Were they old or young, both ladies, or was one a gentleman? Were they narrow and selfish, or many-sided?

Only a lady would pet that handsome Maltese cat. He had the air of a prince in the cat kingdom. He was as much at home as the rug on which he lay, or the fire that now and then snapped out near his paws. A wicker work-basket on a wicker standard, decided that a lady's fingers found business in that room; but whether

she were matron or maiden, the fancy knitting, the spools of silk, the gold thimble, the skein of cream wool did not decide; not even the hem-stitched handkerchief with a frayed corner waiting to be mended. She might be mother or she might be maiden. Plants on green shelves reached from the carpet to the ceiling before one of the wide windows; plants well watered, with shining leaves, and thrifty buds. The fuchsia was hanging with bloom, on the arbuton were thirty-seven yellow bells. Some one loved these plants. The many pictures above each other, and under each other, were fine engravings, foreign scenes, not so foreign to Isobel's eyes, but foreign when one looked out of the window. They did not belong to the stretch of country that started from the lawn, and ran away and up to the purple line that might be hills, through the misty afternoon. They belonged to the side of the world that Isobel had lived on. There were faces that were foreign as well. One did not imagine that the face bent over that sewing-basket, had eyes like that Italian girl, or the expression of that Greek mother. The children in the daisy field, however, might be children who lived across the way in that white farm-house, and the daisy field might

certainly be viewed from one of these wide windows.

The carpet—Isobel's taste would have rejoiced in that carpet—a rich Brussels, with a ground of white sprinkled over with flowers of every hue, mingled with sprays and vines of green; but for that the room would not have been luxurious. The lounging chairs were somewhat shabby, the rugs were of home workmanship, and had the air of being made to save the carpet; the brown and gray table-cover was darned in several places; Isobel's eye would have taken note of those darns.

There were two book-cases, crowded with books, that had not been printed within the present century, but the literature scattered about, was all of recent date; magazines, pamphlets, newspapers, story-books in paper; in German, French, English. There was a cabinet containing coins upon a small mahogany table in a corner; a case of stuffed birds stood in another corner. The room reminded one of a museum; the owner evidently must have all his possessions about him.

Isobel would have stood in appreciative delight, but she would have been too shy to speak, had the door been suddenly opened and master or mistress appeared.

Everything in the room had been placed there for love of it; it was a room to be *real* in, to be one's own self, even if that self were real bad.

The master and mistress were themselves to each other and to their neighbors. The only good some people found in Jue Dekker was that she was not a sham. Her wickedness was unmistakably natural and real. I do not know that many people called her wicked, she was simply natural; she had made herself out of herself.

"I am as I was born," was frequently on her lips. She had forgotten that she could become worse than she was born.

Six o'clock, and dusk, this rainy August afternoon, and no one has come in. There are sounds in the distant kitchen; a quick light tread, and a shrill voice pitched high, singing:

"Come, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better *potion* trace."

Anastasia declared that she knew all the hymn book through, as well as all the Bible.

A square room, called the pump-room, and another square room containing a large closet, separated the kitchen from "Miss Jue's room." Miss Jue sometimes wished the walls of separation were

twice as many, especially when Anastasia waxed loudly fervent in her hymns.

The house, from the road, has a long, many windowed appearance. There are piazzas front and back. There are eight small rooms on the second floor, and five of similar size upon the third. The kitchen, with its second story, was an after-thought, as were several of the piazzas. Four of the rooms upon the second floor are furnished, none at all upon the third. The unfurnished rooms are used as store-rooms and lumber-rooms. Every room was furnished with people and things years ago, before Jue and Perez were summoned east to visit their great-grandfather, but somehow, they do not know quite how, everybody has gone, taking something, and the brother and sister are alone, as they have always wished to be, keeping house for each other.

Jue and Perez are the latest comers. They came to stay when grandmother died, three years ago; he from his studies and his wanderings, and she from her school. They came at first, because they were sent for; and then they stayed because it seemed the best and only thing to be done, he having accepted a professorship in the city twenty-seven miles distant, and she having quar-

relled with her principal, after working with her twenty-three hard years.

"Come and do nothing, Jue," Perez had written to her. The doing nothing this afternoon, had consisted in a call over the way. She was interested to hear something more about "that girl." At six o'clock she picked her way across the muddy road, holding up her dress and steadying the silk umbrella over her head.

The glow of the fire greeted her, for Anastasia had remembered it at the last moment, and the fragrance of tea was abroad. Miss Dekker loved her cup of tea and this fire.

As she stood in the doorway, divested of her wraps, our sensitive Isobel would not have loved her. I think she would have fled through another doorway. She was very tall, taller than her brother, with a figure so thin and flat, as to suggest a paper doll. Isobel's impression would have been: "She sees through you, and she has no compassion."

Her complexion was sallow, her small brown eyes deep set, her hair brushed smoothly down at each side of her face, hiding her ears, instead of changing to white, had dried and died, turning to dingy brown: her cheeks were sunken, her chin

long, with the polished skin drawn tightly over it; in every line of her face was written the history of her half-century of unloved and unloving life.

They who love are born of God. Jue Dekker had never loved, in her life, as one loves who is born of God.

I wish I did not have to tell you that she believed herself to be a Christian. She read the Bible every day, and prayed long prayers night and morning; but she was an idolater,—she worshipped herself.

Her dress fitted to perfection. She made a perfect fit of everything she touched; the material was cashmere, the color dark green. Inches of sallow neck, with prominent veins, rose above the narrow linen collar; linen cuffs gave a finish to the sleeves; her hands were long, thin, and full-veined; they were hands that could grasp and hold on.

“O, my fire,” she exclaimed, in the tone of some women caressing a child.

Miss Dekker did not love children ; she said she hated them.

The fire was something to come back to ; she had so little to go out to, or to come back to.

“I might have been a happy woman, but for—” she thought every day.

She never thought "but for myself."

In fifteen minutes her brother would drive in at the wide gate, and tea must be on the table ; it would become cold before he tasted it, but he liked to see it hot in his cup.

Perez would be thirty-one on this October, and he was rapidly falling into old bachelor ways. Beside the round table scattered over with books there was another round table, which served as breakfast, dinner and tea table. The china was kept in an old-fashioned sideboard, the table cloths and napkins were laid away in drawers in the closet at the right of the fireplace.

Miss Dekker moved around briskly, setting the tea table, glancing alternately at the clock and out the window down the road. Her brother was somebody to come back to. Anastasia brought in the tea as Perez sprang out on the piazza; his coat was pulled up about his ears, his slouched hat drawn down over his eyes; the rain had been chilled to sleet.

"Well," exclaimed Miss Jue, in a brisk tone of welcome. The outside world came into her days with him; not that she was so much interested of this outside world, as she was often weary of her inside world. This brother and

sister exchanged no sentimental greetings or farewells; she always kissed him when he started out upon a tour, and when he returned; she said if there were any nonsense in him her course of training had crushed it out; he would marry his wife from common sense, and not from foolish sentiment.

Old Mr. Devoe told his neighbors that Miss Dekker was the man of the two.

“Perez.”

His tea had been growing cold fifteen minutes, and he had not tasted it; he was eating his supper with a book open beside his plate.

He raised his eyes as soon as he pleased (which was in seven minutes after she had spoken), in recognition of her breaking the silence; he was five years younger when he raised his eyes.

“I learned something this afternoon.”

“I congratulate you,” he said, with scarcely perceptible sarcasm.

“It isn’t anything to be congratulated upon,” she answered tartly, “it is only something about that girl; that French girl.”

Miss Dekker arched her right eyebrow and kept it arched while she was talking. Perez betrayed no interest in the subject.

"I wish you would let me give you some hot tea."

"This is hot enough. Where have you been?"

"Over the way. Who else knows anything about her?"

"Oh, you mean Isobel Kellinger."

"I was not aware that you were interested in any other girl."

"I am—in every girl and every boy that holds any promise. I gave a lecture to forty girl teachers one day, and I was interested in every one of them."

"He felt like talking to-day; he showed me a portrait of his daughter, her mother."

"Isobel says she is wonderful."

"Isobel—as you call her—has never seen her."

"Not seen her own mother!" he exclaimed, incredulously.

"She has seen her step-mother. That woman is no more her mother than I am."

"That explains it, then. I am glad to have it explained. I did not like to think a mother could be no more to a daughter than she has been."

"Where have you lived all your life?" she asked, scornfully. "Did you get your ideas of mothers from poetry?"

“I have seen some mothers that I would like to put into poetry. But why doesn't the girl know it?”

“She will before she comes home. The old man has had a letter from his son-in-law, scape-grace that he is. He ran away with Hope Devoe—or she ran away with him. Her father had forbidden him the house. She died and left the little girl, not three months old. It's a bad story, but she deserved it: girls always do, and usually get it when they take their lives into their own hands. And then, indecently soon, he married a cousin of his wife's, Isobel Devoe, and they carried the child off to France, and left her in a boarding-school; and that's the whole shameful story.”

“It is a shameful story,” he exclaimed, hotly. “Poor little Bel!”

“And now he has borrowed money from the owners of the ship without their knowledge, and speculated with it and lost it. They have cast him adrift. The old man is thankful they have done nothing worse. He had the impudence to apply to him for money. He writes that he is too poor to take care of Isobel any longer; that his wife was jealous of her, and would never let him show any fondress for her; that she must either

do something for herself, or be sent to the old man. Tho old man is only too glad."

"Naturally. But it will break her heart to learn that that woman is not her mother."

"When she has treated her so?" said Miss Jue, incredulously.

"Bel thinks it is her father who has kept them apart. The girl responds to love as a flower does to the sunshine; you understand *that*. Love her, and her life is in your hands."

"All very pretty," responded Miss Jue's cold voice. "But she will have something else to do if she comes into that house. The old man is sick and poor."

Perez stirred his tea and looked into it, thinking of the softened and hardened little creature standing before him, telling him the story of her school days.

"I wonder if she could teach?" he said, after a while.

"Teach! You think a girl is made to study. Does she know anything?"

"Her knowledge is not available, I suspect. She knows French."

Miss Dekker had never taught beyond fractions and United States' history. She despised the

knowledge and the method of the "girl teachers" to whom Perez had lectured.

"She will run off like her mother; we needn't be too tender towards such blood as she inherits. Such a father, too; no better than an adventurer. I should let her alone."

"You will change your mind when you see her."

"I am not weak enough to be overcome by a pretty face," was the scornful reply.

"Her face is not her attraction. She has made her face by being herself, as you and I have."

"Why should she not have a shock and be unhappy? Why should she be shielded, any more than the rest of us? I never had any one to keep shocks from falling on me. Let her learn what life is—to other folks. Not with young bitterness like Isobel's, but the bitterness of many bitter years."

"What is life to other folks?" he questioned lightly.

"Something a little better than death, because most people prefer it."

"Do not talk so to her; I beg of you."

"I shall talk to her as I do to other folks."

Taking his book to the fire, giving old Malt a kick by the way, something he had never done be-

fore; his sister noticed it, and laid it up against him and against Isobel Kellinger.

Perez never quarrelled with his sister; he was too much the gentleman; Miss Jue never quarrelled with her brother, she was too much afraid of him. Keeping her eyes upon her work, she darned the frayed corners of her handkerchief, folding it up and laying it aside with the feeling that it was one more thing done; getting things done, was the supreme pleasure of Miss Dekker's life.

"How few words the average man needs to express himself," exclaimed the Professor of English Literature, tossing his book across to the table.

"You are a fool if you think a man ever does express himself," remarked his sister.

"But not a fool if I believe it of a woman," he laughed. "I say, Julia, what makes you so cross?"

"That girl," giving her thread a twitch. "Why shouldn't she see the hard side of life? Why have you all got to sympathize and smooth things for her? Her father is poor, as well as a rascal; why shouldn't she go into somebody's kitchen? I hate to see young things growing up and getting the best of things."

"She has not had any of them yet. Her soul

was starved in that school, her mind fed on stuff, and her heart has always been hungry—if that is what you mean by the best of things.”

Miss Jue was silent. She would not define what she meant; youth, a fair amount of beauty, opportunity— The best of things to her were what she had not. Her time was past, and she grudged that time to every girl she met or heard of; the blossom of girlhood and the bloom of womanhood were as canker eating into her soul; the face bent over her work was not encouraging to further expostulation. Conversation between these two always broke into abruptness. Each was beginning to feel, brother and sister as they were, that they had nothing in common beside the morning and evening meals. To keep her brother from thinking of a wife was among her chief aims; every day he was thinking more of this possible wife, because of the attitude of her life towards his life. Prosper Dekker, his dearest friend, believed that Perez, like the young man whom Jesus loved, lacked only his giving up himself and following him.

He reached for another book, and held it in his hand, while he gazed straight into the fire; she twitched at her thread, then broke it, and at

last pushed her sewing aside for work that would not be so trying to her eyes. What right had her eyes to fade and grow dim? What right had she to sink into nothingness, while everything was in the world to be had? What good had ever come to her by Bible reading or her prayers?

Her reverie was interrupted by a laugh; old Malt was on Perez's knee, and he was stroking his back.

"I was thinking of those girls' faces to-day, when I was telling them that some professor could demonstrate to his class in half a minute, that a student is not a rhinoceros."

"I could do it in less time than that."

"Please do it then."

"I prefer to hear his demonstration."

"He said that if any student were a rhinoceros, some rhinoceros must be a student; but we know that no rhinoceros is a student, therefore it is clear that no student is a rhinoceros."

Miss Jue muttered something in a harder tone than usual, pushed her work into the basket, and said good-night. Their evenings together were as dismal to her as to him; he was so gracious and bright to every one else, why could he not be gracious and bright to her? He would take no

trouble for her, because she was not young, or learned, or handsome.

Her good-night met with a half-intelligible utterance; Miss Jue was not so wrong in this conclusion, as in some others; Perez did not give half his best self to her.

She *was* old in his eyes, and ignorant; even ugly, when she was "cross." Had he not known that she was his sister, he would have disliked her and probably made light of her eccentricities.

His mother he did not remember; his father had been the one love and admiration of his life. When his sister said to herself that he was selfish and self-seeking, she spoke another truth; she saw through him as easily as through others. Jue Dekker was the only person she knew whom she did not "see through."

There was no light burning in the hall; that was an extravagance her housewifely soul abhorred; the light that fell over the narrow stairway, came from the candle in her hand. A glow of heat met her as she opened her bedroom door; heat was her luxury, as thinking was her brothers. Their luxuries kept them alive.

Setting the candle on the bureau, she went to the stove to hold her hands above it, and to feel

the sensation of heat through and through before she did the next thing.

The next thing was to brush her hair, wash her hands, and then read a chapter in the Bible; she could not have slept had she not washed her hands and read her chapter in the Bible. She was not sure that Perez ever read the Bible; she often placed one within his reach. The Bible in his chamber, she believed, would never have been touched, had she not touched it to dust it. Sitting on a low rush-bottomed rocker, with her long hair falling over her back, and the candle held close to the book, she read half aloud, in a reverent monotone, the third chapter of John. She did not always read with faith, but she always read with common sense.

A man must be born again to enter the kingdom of God; *every* one must that was born once—must be born twice; a man was born once that he *might* be born twice; that was the blessedness of being born the first time. Yes, she knew that. She knew it, but it made no real difference to her; she knew that it made no real difference to her. It did not make the difference to her that this, or something akin to it, made to Marietta Devoe. She was not glad that she was born the first time;

she was not glad even if she could not be born the second time without being born the first time; she was glad that if she had to be born, that she had not been permitted to die—yet; that she had been kept alive somehow until to-night. One could not have Heaven without having something of earth; but if she had not been born at all she would only have lost what she knew nothing about—and she was perfectly willing to lose that. Perfectly willing to lose Christ, and yet be a Christian! There was a tremor in the long fingers that had closed over the book; for the first time in thirty years she felt that she was not what she had so long called herself—a Christian. She had never “joined the church,” she had not felt ready to take that last step, but when some one said “Miss Dekker, I wish you were a Christian,” she turned away in bitter anger; was she not as good a Christian as this timid little woman who had spoken?

“She could not finish her “chapter” at once; she sat thinking, the hair falling over her thin temples, her cheek resting in her palm; the candlestick in the other hand was held unsteadily.

Anastasia closing her door two rooms away, roused her. She finished the chapter mechanically,

wondering where Enon and Salim were, not daring to go deep into the teachings; it was easier to speculate when John the Baptist left off speaking, and whether the Lord said all these things to Nicodemus, or whether John the Writer had written from inspiration. This speculative way of reading the Bible was more to her taste; some people, never thought about the places or the people, but she always looked them up: she must look up Salim and see what the name of the "much water," was; some people did not care to go deep into these things, but she had the intellect of a student.

That little woman who had spoken to her coming out of church had asked the minister in the Bible class where it was in the Old Testament that Nicodemus might have learned about Christ.

She had given her a look and answered herself. The woman was as ignorant as Nicodemus himself. And she had presumed to speak to her.

She closed the Bible and knelt to pray; but the words did not come readily to-night; she thought of Bel Kellinger when she prayed for all the world, but her heart did not soften toward her; she ended with the Lord's Prayer, and believing that she had prayed because she had obeyed the Lord's command: "After this manner, therefore, pray ye."

“ I never felt so stirred up before ; it’s that French girl coming, and the way Perez behaves about her.”

After extinguishing the candle the room seemed alive with the darkness. She shivered and touched the first thing that came within reach of her hand; to be born once, and not to be born again, where were you ?

The woodbox was piled with wood. There were bits of kindling at one side ; she felt down for them and pulled them out, raking the embers together and kindling them to a blaze; when the wood was well burning she left the stove door open and went back to bed, laying with her face toward the light. She was born ; and she *must* be born again. Perez was moving about in the room below. For the first time she was glad that he never came upstairs till midnight.

He arose as soon as he was left alone and began his usual saunter about the long room. It had been two rooms before he had the partition taken down, and the archway made between ; the atmosphere became clearer as soon as his sister ceased to breathe it with him. He straightened himself, lifted his head and threw out his arms as if to assure himself that some invisible burden had

been cast off. The two hours before midnight were his "vacation;" he might read any book he liked, he might think any thoughts he liked without regard to to-morrow's work; he said that it was these two hours as well as his sound sleep, that kept him from wearing out; he could not imagine himself the victim of hard work and hard thinking Prosper had become.

It scarcely grieved him now that his sister's presence was a burden and her absence a felt relief; he had years ago decided that the best thing he could do for them both was to leave her alone; to live in peace with her was the thing most to be desired, and he would do that if he had to bite his tongue in two to keep from speaking. He did not know that she was more afraid of his eyes than of his tongue.

She was born hard, and she had had fifty years experience in growing harder.

He paused before the plants. Jue did love those plants; and with a lighting of the eyes he stood before the children in the daisy field, and then he pulled aside the red moreen curtain. The house across the way had become a living thing to him since he had listened to Bel Kellinger's voice and felt the influence of her girlish

presence ; heretofore he had felt but the interest he felt in every human being in the feeble old man and his ministering angel, Marietta Devoe.

The yellow linen shades at the two end windows were down; the light shone through them out towards the road, and through the front windows out into the deep yard. That light shone till midnight, like his own, for the old man could not sleep in the early part of the night, and Miss Devoe had to read to him until his head sunk forward and he did not give an impatient groan at an abrupt pause in the reading.

Miss Devoe read to him every book that she could borrow, far and near ; he seemed to have little choice, he said; everything was grist that came to his mill ; he could get something out of it to think about.

Marietta Devoe was Mrs. Kellinger's sister; her senior by ten years; a woman, who, like Jue Dekker, had lived half a century of life ; but in that alone like the woman who had been afraid to go to sleep in the dark.

"The girl will have her," thought Perez; "she will be better than no mother. She is narrow, but she is warm-hearted and womanly."

After a few more turns about the room, he

poured a glass of milk from the pitcher on the sideboard and then threw himself into one of the cushioned lounging chairs, resting his head comfortably and bringing his feet up to the foot-rest Jue had worked for his last birthday.

While his two hours passed in the luxury of rest and thinking, the two people over the way in the well-warmed and well-lighted room were talking to each other, for Mr. Devoe was not in a mood to listen to a book to-night; his own life had suddenly grown into more interest for him than the most exciting book he had ever read.

He had been wearying for something *young*; there had been nothing young in his life since that day more than twenty years ago that he had brought from the post-office the newspaper with the blue pencil mark among the marriages: Hope Devoe to John Kellinger. Two days before Hope had begged to visit her cousins, Marietta and Isobel; he had let her go reluctantly, for she was all he had since her babyhood; he could trust her, for had not John Kellinger been away a year without writing to her once?

"Marietta, if you ever cross her in anything I will turn you out of doors."

Marietta brushed the ashes from the stove-hearth and looked wise.

"She has been better off than if your giddy sister had the care of her."

"She has certainly been no worse off," said Marietta, advisedly. "Still, Isobel is only giddy. I often wonder what shock will open her eyes."

"You must get some of her French notions out of her head. Do you suppose they have made a papist of her?"

"The school is Protestant; giddy as she is, my sister would think of that."

"*He* wouldn't."

"He has not had his way with the child."

"No; for he would have sent her to me as soon as her mother died. *She* wanted to keep her, and to keep him, and to keep her away from him. But she's mine now!" said the old man fiercely; "nothing in the law or the gospel will take her from me."

"Then you are satisfied at last."

"I would be, if I could open her veins, and let out every drop of her father's deceitful, underhanded, knavish blood."

"She is your blood, too, Uncle Harold," with a flush in the faded cheeks.

"You needn't fear that I'll forget that."

III.

PROSPER DEKKER.

It was Sunday morning in Havre. Isobel's grandfather would have asked her how she knew it was Sunday, for the busy square had very much the appearance of yesterday. Week-day work was going on as usual; the stores were open, and the laborers were digging and drawing dirt. Madame had no desire to attend church, and when Isobel, out of idleness, suggested it, she pleaded headache, and said that a chapter from that new English novel would soothe her and not excite her.

"Does church excite you?" inquired Isobel, scornfully. "You usually go to sleep."

"I do not like to sleep in church. I feel wicked when I think of it at bed-time."

"Lizette says an American is to preach there to-day. I want to see him. I am not sure that I want to hear him. I never listened to a sermon in my life."

"It is wicked to go to church and not pray and listen. It is better for you to remain at home, and soothe my headache away."

Bel did not think it was better, and would not consent to read to her until Madame had promised to take her to chapel that evening.

In the evening, when they started out, they found the streets, as usual, filled with pleasure seekers; crowds were gathered in the public garden, and the band was playing its merriest music.

The windows of every house they passed, even to the third story, were filled with plants in luxuriant bloom. Grandfather would have said that the plants were one good thing in the wicked city.

"I would rather walk out to St. Adresse, than go to chapel," complained Madame.

"I would not see my American at St. Adresse," returned Bel, in her wilful voice. "There is nothing there beside villas and gardens."

"Your American may not be worth seeing or hearing," said Madame.

"If he is not we can leave him," said Isobel, placidly; "I hope he has not eyes and eyebrows like Mr. Dekker: I hope he will tell me something my heart aches to know."

"About America?"

"No," said Isobel, with the ready scorn that often met Madame's suggestions; "about something nearer to me than America; about myself. I want to know what is the good of my existence."

"Some one else would be eating your bread and drinking your coffee if you were not."

"I wish some one else had it then; I wish I had never been thought of."

The chapel was an unpretending building, well lighted, and with comfortable seats; Madame settled herself in a corner, and prepared herself for a nap. Bel's eyes were intent upon discovering her American.

He would speak English in American fashion, like Mr. Dekker; but what was American fashion? Her mother spoke rapidly; — her father — but she knew very little of her father's spoken English.

Two English ladies with whom she had a slight acquaintance, came into the seat with her; directly in front was seated the gentleman whom Bel had decided must be an American ship-master; the two girls were with him; the younger sat beside him. Their eyes were alert and keen. For a few moments Bel forgot to watch for the preacher in her curious study of their faces and attire. Would

she become acquainted with girls like them in America?

The older girl had thoughtful eyes; the younger was simply eager.

Two gentlemen came down the aisle together. The taller one Bell recognized as the minister of the chapel; the other one, not tall, with bent shoulders, long light hair, gold-rimmed spectacles and quick tread, must be the American. She was relieved to find that he was not at all like her memory of Mr. Dekker. She was sure she would stay and listen to him; and she thought she would believe every word he uttered.

Madame nudged her, and whispered, "So small and insignificant."

Isobel gave her a quick look of annoyance, and would not deign to speak. Madame never recognized the best in anybody; she never seemed to see anything below one's complexion. There was an air of purity and force about this stranger that drew Bel to him as she had never been drawn to stranger or friend before; she felt something of what he was made of; there was an indefinable difference between him and Mr. Dekker.

When he spoke his voice was unlike any voice she had ever heard; she said to herself that it was

clear and strong, and deep and sweet; she hoped he sang bass.

The minister introduced him as Reverend Prosper Dekker of New York. She was so intent in thinking of him that she did not catch one word of the introduction, not once thinking that anything the minister said could have reference to *him*.

His first words riveted Bel's attention.

"If I were standing before you in my own name to-night, I should crave your forbearance; but I have come because I was sent, and I have something to give you, because something has been given to me. A year ago I lost my strength through overwork, and since have not been able to preach, not even to study or read. I have opened the Bible for one minute or less each day, and what I gathered I made note of, and that is all I have for you to-night. You remember one time, after the Lord had fed the hungry multitude (there were men and women, beside children, as there are here to-night); he bade the disciples gather up the fragments, the broken bits, that nothing of what he had given them might be thrown away.

"I have some of the broken bits of my year's experiences for you. I dared not trust myself to mould them into one loaf; they are very small and

insufficient bits of the loaves he broke and blessed for me. If I could give them to you as they were given to me !

“But he can do that. I was very empty when he fed me; to-night I am but the basket that holds the fragments. I was in many moods and help came for every one; our moods, our hearts, out of which our moods grow, are so alike that I feel sure of having something for you, although you have wept and suffered, toiled and rejoiced in another land.”

He took a book from his pocket and began to read; many times he dropped it and carried the thought further on, seeming to find inspiration in the eyes that were fixed upon him.

The sea-captain moved not a muscle. He listened with his eyes half closed, with the intentness with which he scanned his charts. Bel flushed until her cheeks were burning. If it were all true, was she not glad that she had been born to learn it ?

The beginning was abrupt; he gave them the fragment he had picked up first: “The Lord loves to help us as quickly as we can bear to be helped; sometimes help might prove to be our greatest hindrance, that is, what we call *help*; it might be worse than to be left alone.

“We have to be told so little at a time. A lis-

tening heart is something more and better than a listening mind. The heart often lags behind, while the mind is on the alert. How many questions a child can ask in one breath: how many answers can it understand? I have been wondering, not with idle curiosity, but with reverent wonder, how those blind eyes which Christ touched, could bear the light, and all that light revealed of human faces and human things. How they could bear it so suddenly! Was not that a part of the miracle? I know a lady who fears she will be dazzled and bewildered by her first flash of heaven: and she will be—as much as Bartimeus was when his opened eyes looked up into the face of the Lord.

“Just so, just as he did that, he prepares us every day to meet our life. The surprises are not more than we can bear. Every day our life is prepared to meet us. How much faith it would require in a human soul to be willing to be ushered into this world, if he knew the ways of the world, but did not know the ways of God. It can breathe, it can cry, what else can it do for its helpless self?

“I used to be afraid of *shocks*. There are no shocks to the soul which God leads hour by hour,

and from one of his happenings to another of his happenings.

“How do we know that the eye of the blind man was not being made ready to receive the shock and suddenness of the light before he was moved to call out to the Son of David to have mercy on him?

“Before we call, God sometimes answers—because of that answer moving in us we are moved to cry out. God can work backward as well as forward. His time is every time. There is no backward or forward in his eternity. Still, if he be silent toward you for awhile, be satisfied. In his silence he is thinking of you. His not doing is most gracious doing.

“God knew Jeremiah as well as he knows you, and yet he was silent toward him once for ten days. He tries us, not to prove us to himself, for he knew us before we were born (and that is why we *were* born,) but he tries us, is silent or speaks, to prove us to ourselves. How can any man know himself, unless God reveal to him what is in his deceitful heart?

“Do we know our sins as he knows them? We must ask him, if we would have every sin touched by his forgiveness, to forgive all the sins *he* knows about, not only the few we know about.

“Do you know what your greatest sin is? Think over every command you have broken, every law of love you have not kept. But it is not that, nor all of that. It is not the sins of yesterday that will lose your soul, it is the *sin* of yesterday; it is not the sinning, it is the something worse, *it is the not repenting*. Unbelief is the sin of the world;—it is *your* sin. If you have not faith in Christ, how can you repent toward God?

If you do not believe now—this hour, this minute, in Jesus Christ, whom God hath sent, you are this very minute guilty of the greatest sin in the world, and you are already condemned to die for your unbelief. You not only sin, but you *love* to sin, which is worse. Every sin has its root in unbelief. If you believed in Jesus Christ you wouldn't do that wicked thought in your heart; you couldn't.

“Do you desire to know what your life means, what the good of it is? There is only one way to discover it: *obey Jesus Christ*. Obedience brings out all the juices of life. Your life will dry up in this world and burn up in the next, if you do not believe that God has sent his Son into this world to save your life. Are you afraid of believing too much? Can you believe more than God *is*?

“ ‘Does God know more than he has put into the Bible?’ questioned a child. St. John says the world itself could not contain the books, if all of Jesus Christ were put into books.

“Take God’s words, his promises, his threatenings, as simply as he has spoken them ; do not be wise enough and deep enough to dig into them and find they mean something else.

“Are you longing for an easy time in this world ? What kind of a time had Christ ? He came to do his Father’s will, and that Will was that he should be crucified. Was he doing the will of his Father that day he was crucified, any more than any other day ? Was he not doing his Father’s will asleep on the pillow as well as hanging on the cross ?

“Washing the disciples’ feet was not the first-humble work he had to do ; a part of his Father’s business was in making wooden things for men to use. By the word of his power the worlds were framed ; and yet he came into this world to serve an apprenticeship to learn how to frame a barn. And yet some people do not know what they were born for ; they were born to use their hands upon the first thing that hand touches.

“The Lord made the world out of nothing, but he does not expect us to furnish our lives or do his

work out of nothing; the world is made *full* for our using. 'What is that in thine hand?' he said to Moses. It was only a rod, but Moses had it to do God's will with.

"Some people believe they live above this life; the truth is they live *below* it; they cannot reach up to the small things of God's making; absent-minded spirituality savors too much of selfishness; present-minded spirituality is keeping one's eyes open where God has placed us, and seeing and using the things around us.

"It is selfish and ease-loving to pray when one should be up and on the alert to answer his own prayers. It is queer that one may continue in prayer too long, do nothing beside pray; work in the spirit of prayer is mighty praying.

"Joshua rent his clothes once and fell to the earth, and lay there till eventide; and when the Lord answered him, he said: 'Get thee up'—'Up, sanctify the people.' Do something beside pray for them; go to work for them.

"It seems—if we look around and study lives and living, that some people are sent into this world not at all for their own sakes, but just to take care of other people—like Jesus. Do you not believe they are happy—like Jesus? If there were not

such people, some of the rest of us would fare badly.

“ You must *wear* your life out ; you desire to be all used up when you die ; how better can you do better than use yourself up in God’s service ? Do you want to try some other service first ? Do you want to serve Satan, and see what you get for it, and then turn around and try the Lord ? I’d save some of my best for the Lord if I were you. But I beseech you, do not live simply and only to save your soul ; live to make God glorious in the eyes of his children ; don’t you see, if you *must* be selfish about it, that the more glorious you make your Father, the more you, his child, have to glory in ?

“ God is so good to me, that I know, even without looking into your faces, that he is as mercifully good to every one of you. Why not ?—when it is not in *me* but in him.

“ I do not think that I feel as thankful as some profess to do, for birth in a Christian land ; I am so thankful to be born at all that I think I should be thankful to be born in any land. If God should say to me to-night, knowing what I know of his wisdom and loving forethought, ‘ Will you choose to be born in America, or in India ? ’ I think I

should say (I hope I should), 'Choose for me; thou canst take care of me anywhere in the wide universe; thou canst draw me to Thee as easily in one part of thy kingdom as in another; I am sure thou will not forget me, where thou hast put me.'

"But you urge: 'You may hear of Jesus in a Christian land; there are more Bibles, and more ministers and churches.' True; but I cannot listen and believe without the Holy Spirit. I might hear and refuse to believe in a Christian land. How many do! How many of you are refusing to believe to-night?

"And if you refuse to believe in a Christian land, is not your condemnation greater than that of the soul who never heard his name?

"Whether you believe in him, or believe not in him in a Christian land, or in a heathen land, the grace is all of God; you do not make yourself believe; he makes you believe. The Holy Spirit knows the way to India, as well as to England, and one distance is no greater to him than another. The celestial geography is not as mixed up as ours. Do you think your own little spot of ground is all God is watching over? Every place is on God's map.

"Was not Abraham an idolater when God called

him? You have nothing especially to be thankful for—unless it is a higher degree of civilization—being born in France, than you have for being born in Japan—*unless* you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as yet, has more Bibles and ministers in a Christian than in a heathen land.

“If it go hard with you, it will go all the harder because you were born in a land of light. The “Woe” was greater to Bethsaida and Chorazin, than to Tyre and Sidon. May not the woe be greater to you, than to your black-browed brother?

“Jesus Christ will come to judge the secrets of men. One of the secrets is whether that idolater in Japan, who has died since you have been sitting here listening to me, would have repented and renounced his idol worship, had he heard of Jesus Christ as many times as you have: whether he would go away to-night with a heart as hard or as soft as yours? Would you rather be in his place or your own, when your judgment day comes? Would you rather be in your own because you believe in Christ to-night? Can you give the Lord some good reason why you do not believe what I say this minute, as I speak?

“Christ came down to the earth to tell you

lovely things about his Father; the loveliest is, that he so loved the world.

“What is God *like* to you?”

“I wish I could hear every one of you answer that question. There is only one likeness of him that has ever been made, or ever will be made. He made this one himself—*Christ, the image of God*.

“Would you like to ask Christ questions about God? Ask him. The Holy Spirit will answer you. You have the same right to ask Christ questions that Peter had, or John.

“Do you want the promises of God? Put yourself in a position to claim them, to have a right to them, to take them because they are your own. All things are yours. The fulness of the earth is for you. The fulness of the earth is everything it is filled with; everything that God has made and taught man how to make.

“Some one met a very aged French abbé in the Rocky Mountains, and when he asked the old minister how he chanced to be in such a wild place, so far from home, he replied, that once he was very ill, and he fancied he died, and the angels asked him what he thought of the beautiful world he had left. And then it occurred to him that he had been preaching all his life about

heaven, and that he knew almost nothing about the world God had made and put him in. He determined he would learn something of the fulness of the earth, and for that purpose journeyed to the Rocky Mountains.

“God will show us heaven by-and-by; now he shows us the earth. Like the old abbé, I have started out to learn something about the earth, and I hope and expect to learn the glory of God, through the things he has made.

“Do you realize that everything we learn helps us to *be*? You have given yourself to Christ for Christ’s sake. The more you *are* the more you honor him to whom you belong. Your influence is worth just as much as you are—and not one whit more.

“People talk about their ‘influence.’ Let them make it worth something before they worry about it, or delight in it. Your influence is as heavy—weighs just as much, as your purity, your faith, your devotion, your service, your unselfishness—and other people are better judges of that than you are.

“I have heard it argued that it is selfish to spend much time upon one’s self. So it is—too much time,—but we must each of us take all the time

that we need to make ourselves perfect. I may need more time than you. But time spent upon one's self *is* time spent upon others. To be personal—I have spent a great deal of time and thought in jotting down these words I am giving to you. I trust it is not all for myself. I picked up the fragments, and God is using them—all broken as they are. If they are not broken from the bread he blessed, do not take them—he has something better for you.

“How can you learn if I am telling you the truth? Compare it with the truths Christ has spoken. He told his disciples that nothing by any means should hurt them. Was Paul ever hurt? He shook the viper off into the fire. But he was beheaded; was a hair of his head hurt then, or did Christ keep his promise? What does the Lord mean by *hurt*? Not exactly what you and I mean, sometimes.

“We think we are hurt if we do not have what we are seeking after and working for. The disappointed man is hurt; the poor man, the sick man; as boys and girls grow up they are hurt—so hurt they are sure they can never be healed, if life does not hold out to them what they desire most.

“Do not be afraid; you will never be hurt until

you believe a lie; and then you will be hurt only so long as you believe it.

“Are you afraid of God’s truth; is that why you shrink from it and hesitate to believe it?”

“God’s truth is himself. Christ said: ‘I am the Truth.’ When you believe the truth you believe Christ, and when you love and obey the truth you love and obey him who made the truth *true*.

“Is the truth an easy thing to learn? Does it come by guess work, or simply by listening, as you are listening to me?”

“It was his disciples who had been with him from the first who had need to have their understandings opened.

“We are born with shut understandings; nothing save the touch of the Holy Spirit can open their mysterious springs; even Christ’s words from his own lips held not their full meaning until he opened their understandings.

“This declaration means nothing to you, unless God teaches you what it means. How do I know that you understand the simplest truths? I do not know; how do you know? How do you know when you misunderstand? Did the disciples understand after that? Read the Acts of the Apostles, and you will know; read their Epistles, and

you will know. When people read *your* acts they know how well or how ill *you* understand the Scriptures.

“I heard a man say once : ‘ There’s nothing between God and me.’

“ When you kneel down to pray, to unbosom yourself to God, do you think there is nothing between God and you? No one between God and you?

“ You cannot go to God and be accepted, unless Jesus Christ comes between you and God ; the only approach to God and nearness to him is Jesus Christ between.

“ Oh, how often I am asked, ‘ What is it to believe?’ Believe, and you will know what it is. Another question was asked me on the steamer: ‘ Is there any way of knowing, of being *sure* that a thing not promised, is, or not, God’s will?’ I know of but one sure way to find out; ask him. Ask him for what you desire, no matter if it isn’t mentioned in the Bible. If he give it, in love and patience, it *is* his will; if he withhold it, it is not his will to give it.

“ But that does not satisfy you; you would like to know to-night.

“ He that believes does not make haste—even in

his praying. There is no need of haste: if we have eternal life, have we not time enough for everything?


“But perhaps it is lack of faith in you? Perhaps it is; if you had more perfect faith the thing you ask might be according to his will to give.

“Perhaps so. I would concern myself more about the faith than the other thing. I do not believe that the other thing is better than the faith; you do, if you persist in praying and desiring the other thing more than the faith.

“Are you willing to have the measure of faith he chooses to give you—no more, no less?

“Do you know how much he chooses to give?

“Just the measure you ask and are willing to receive. Peter was willing to take enough to go to crucifixion.

“When trouble comes to you is it your choice? Then it must be the choice of him who chooses to send it. 

“Do you know—are you old enough to have learned that we *outgrow* some trouble? I am speaking to any one of you who thinks that no one ever had so much to bear as you have.

“A young girl said to me once, that her toothache was the worst pain in the world. I think

she has outgrown that; another, that earning her own living was the greatest hardship in the world; another that nothing was like being misunderstood and never helped.

“Christ had the greatest trouble—it was worse than the physical suffering of the cross—he had it when he cried out: ‘My God, my God, why hast thou *forsaken* me?’ But remember, trouble or no trouble, nothing matters but the will of God.

“Think of everything in your life, every separate thing that happens to you, everything that you do, or that another does that changes anything for you; everything outside of you that moves you into motion, or emotion, everything that you desire (for, oh, how God educates us through our desires)—think of all these things as illustrating, making pictures of—God’s words.

“‘I was also upright before him; I have kept myself from mine iniquity.’ David said that. Does his life make a picture of the words? David sinned; yes, for he was human: but he made many pictures for those words.

“Will you choose words from God’s book and illustrate them? Begin to-night; give touches and touches as an artist does, till you give the finishing touch.

“Perhaps the Lord does not expect much of me, you urge. How do you know? He expected a great deal of Paul, in spite of his thorn in the flesh; and from Timothy, made weak by his often infirmities.

“Every disobedience, though forgiven, makes a difference in your life—only God knows how great a difference. He alone knows what your life would be if you were not continually thwarting his best for you.

“I am watching your faces; many of you are following every word. Do you remember Mary who sat at the feet of Jesus? There was no indolence in her sitting still, even if brisk Martha may have thought so. She heard his word; but she did more than that, she *chose* the good part.

“That good part is not a part of your life; *it is all of it*. If you choose to follow Christ you have time for nothing else. There will never be one hour for you to follow yourself or to follow the world.

“As busy people say: ‘I have not a minute to myself.’ You will not have a breath of your own after you give yourself to Christ’s will and service.

“You remember the French aphorism: ‘When we *are* right, we are more right than we think we are.’

To be right as Christ was right, is to be right gloriously and eternally. Eternity alone can reveal *how* right.

“And to be wrong, as Satan was wrong in his rebellion, to be on the side against God forever and forever, only an eternity in hell can reveal *how* wrong. And every one of you to-night who is not right, is wrong.”

Bel held her breath as he sat down. Was that all? Was he *through*? Would he not tell her how to get right, for she knew she was all wrong?

Her eager eyes could catch a glimpse of the thick light hair as the head was bent forward, as if in prayer—was he praying for her, for them all? Would she never hear him speak again?

Madame was breathing hard: she pinched her hand to awaken her. The sea-captain threw himself back into an easier position, and drew his little daughter's head down to his shoulder. The two English ladies whispered to each other.

Bel wished her head might go down, too; she trembled, she was afraid; had she been alone she would have wept.

“Was he very stupid?” whispered Madame's voice close to her ear.

“Hush!” she said, excitedly.

As Bel was passing down the aisle, she heard the little girl behind her coaxing earnestly: “O, father, do stay and speak to him, because he is from New York. I am so tired of French people.”

Bel turned to give her a glance—half coveting her opportunity. She had no one to “stay” with her or for her. Her little self would never be brought to his big notice. At her quick backward glance she saw that people were pressing around him; if she could speak, what would she say?

“Tell me more, and tell me *how*.”

The words were so near her lips that she felt as startled as if she had spoken them.

“How the people listened!” said a voice behind her.

“Of course they did!” replied a voice that she was sure must belong to the girls’ father; “don’t you know that people are *starving* for the truth?”

Bel knew it. She knew it without ever having thought of it before. She had been hungry all her life, and now she was starving: and it must be for “the truth,” because these “fragments” had begun to satisfy her longing and to make her keen for more.

“Does he know some people that are starving?” exclaimed Madame, hurrying her loitering companion down the aisle.

Bel thought to herself that he did not mean Madame Mowbray.

IV.

THE GOODSPEED.

How it all came about, Isobel was sure she could decide in her dreams more clearly than when wide awake, for it was like a dream when the most unexpected happening comes to pass; and yet, in a dream, one is never surprised at anything. Events seem to follow each other in a way that is almost natural; the queerest people appearing and the queerest things being done, with one's breath never taken away with surprise.

And now, to-morrow morning early, she would be sailing away from the shores of France—that was not unexpected, it had been drearily expected; but to lie here in a berth in a small state-room of the American ship, Goodspeed, with voices in the cabin that she had been familiar with so few days, and yet, seemingly, so many years.

Two days after that Sunday evening, when she had sat behind them in church, Lizette brought

them all three, up the stone stairs to Madame's chamber. Captain Dermott held in his hand a letter of introduction from her father, and, while she stood bewildered before them and read it, he told Madame that Miss Kellinger's father and himself had started out as boys together more than forty years before.

The girls were not shy. The younger one, Ellinor, asked questions, and the older, Janet, assured her that they would be so glad if she would go with them to Shields. They read and studied and sewed on shipboard, but the days were long, and they retired early, because they grew tired of their own fun and answering each others' questions.

"And we dream about home every night," added Ellinor. "I like to go to bed for that; we tell each other our dreams every morning. Janet dreamed last night she was to be hanged for killing Charles the First."

Madame wept over her after they were gone, and said she never could live without her, and the suddenness of it was exactly like her father, and enough to kill them both. The next mail brought a letter from her mother, written hurriedly. Her father had that hour accepted an inferior position

on board a ship bound to Madras, and would have sailed when she received the letter. She would meet her at Shields and explain matters, and make arrangements for her to go to America; if the Goodspeed did not take a freight for New York, some other ship would be found. It would be cheaper to send her by a sailing vessel than by a steamer. She must keep up and be a good girl: she herself was broken down with disgrace and trouble, and she was glad her dear child had a home to go to and good friends to take her in.

And now a week later, Bel was hiding her face in the pillow, homesick, and dreading more homesickness.

There were four voices in the cabin; for, queerest of all, the American preacher was there, too. She had no idea why he was going to England, nor why he should be going in the Goodspeed. When the girls came for her this evening, Ellinor said he was on board the ship with his baggage, and she had felt too stupid to ask any questions.

Immediately after tea she had asked that she might go into her state-room. The darkness would be a protection. She could hide her face and feel that it was not telling any tales. For an hour or two the murmur of voices continued, interrupted

by low, pleasant laughter. They seemed to have so much to say to each other; Ellinor sat on her father's lap, and Janet spoke to him as if she loved him; Bel did not remember that her father ever took her into his arms. How surprised Ellinor was because she did not know where she was born; she said she had never thought to ask her mother; the first home she remembered was in Havre.

And then, more than all the queer, queer things, the preacher's name was Dekker! When she was not so afraid of him, she would ask him if he knew Perez Dekker; he might be his cousin, he surely was not his brother, with his light hair and blue eyes.

Her small French Testament, the one she had used at school, she had put in her pocket; she had read it every day since that sermon; with the tears streaming over her face, she put out her hand, and in the dark found her dress, and the precious book in the pocket.

There was no light, for lights and fires were not allowed on shipboard, and she could not see one word; she kept it in her hand under the pillow, and so fell asleep.

"I'm so glad we have that girl," remarked

Ellinor, a few moments after Bel had said good-night.

“Kellinger has never treated her right,” returned Ellinor’s father. “Now, I should be proud of a daughter like that.”

“Now, father, you think she is nicer than your own daughters;” pouted Ellinor.

“She is pretty,” said Janet, “and as shy and sweet as a lily of the valley.”

“She has an interesting face,” said Mr. Dekker; “there is an unusual charm about her.”

“I hope we shall go to New York, father, just to take her,” said Ellinor; “she will be a good cargo.”

“That is decided; we shall take a cargo of coal to New York.”

“Perhaps she will let us study French with her?” suggested Janet, “her English is prettier than ours, Nellie. I’m really ashamed of ours when she speaks.”

“Mr. Dekker, I wish I could light a lamp for you, but French law forbids it; you see we are so shut up here in the city that they will not trust us with fire. Our cooking is all done on shore.”

“Have you visited the ship yards, captain?”

“No, I have been tied down to business. I

wanted to take the girls up to Paris, but couldn't trust my mate with the ship."

"They tell me that the ship yards here produce the best vessels in France."

"Yes, and these docks are the finest in the world; they can accommodate over six hundred vessels. Have you studied the history of the city, Miss Janet?"

"No, sir; we did not think of it."

"Then you will be glad to know something of it, perhaps. It was founded by Louis Twelfth at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and consisted then of a few huts only. It was fortified under Francis First and the construction of a port was begun under his supervision—if I may use the word. It was named after him, Ville Françoise, or Francis Copolis, and afterward from a chapel, Havre de Grace. The signification of that is very telling to a sailor. The English took it in 1562, and bombarded it several times in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries."

"I wish we had known that before," said Janet. "Havre would have been more interesting. We have not cared much for it."

"We haven't learned how to travel," said Ellinor, sagely.

“Do you know the names of some of the noted people born here?” Mr. Dekker inquired.

“We do not know *anything*!” exclaimed Janet. “And we have kept a journal, too, but it is full of the noted people—ourselves.”

“Well, Mademoiselle Scudéry is one, and Madame de La Fayette another.”

“We know *her*,” said Ellinor.

“Do you know Bernardin de St. Pierre?”

“No, sir, nor that Mademoiselle,” answered Ellinor.

“Miss Kellinger knows all about them, I suppose,” said Janet, “if she will only open her lips and talk to us.”

These American girls, twelve-year old Ellinor and eighteen-year old Janet, were not as charming and unusual as this French-English-American girl, but they were self-helpful, with minds and wills of their own; and the stranger who was interested in her, was pleased that this shy, reticent, pretty-mannered girl might have them to rub against her, for they would rub against her and startle her every hour of the day. They were frank to bluntness; and she, with her clear eyes, was she untrue? He was interested, and had begun to make a study of her. There was a haze over

her simplicity and a mistiness that seemed to dim what she seemed and what she was. That night, upon his knees, he asked the Lord that his service might be blessed to this young girl.

The next morning, the wind was fair, and the sun shone; the docks were unlocked, and the Good-speed was let out into the English Channel.

That morning Ellinor learned that Havre was situated upon the south shore of the English Channel, and on the right bank of the Seine. She dropped Mr. Dekker's hand and ran down into the cabin to fasten it into her journal before she let it slip out of her mind. She thought before the ship got to England, she would learn how to travel.

As the ship made her way slowly out of the docks, the girls stood upon the quarter-deck. Madame Mowbray and Lizette were watching from the shore; Lizette tearful, and Madame half stunned with the thought that her little Bel was sailing away, never to return to them. But Bel would write, she had promised; still that was little comfort. She had a way of holding her promises lightly, and with the broad Atlantic between them who would help her remember?

Bel waved to them as long as she could discern the two figures. Mademoiselle Abadie had come

to bid her farewell yesterday. These three were all her friends in France; and she had not three on the other side; not two, only one, the old man they called her grandfather.

The three beside her were strangers. She could not understand Janet; that talkative flyaway, Ellinor, shocked her continually, and Mr. Dekker was as far above her as the stars.

He moved about everywhere, seeming to feel no strangeness, as much at home with Ellinor as though he had known her all her life; she could not imagine him in any place or among any people where he would not be at home with himself.

She was not at home with herself.

“We know him because he’s an American,” Ellinor confided to Bel, pulling at Bel’s scarlet shawl; “when you are in a foreign country an American is just like your brother. Janet was so glad over the *Herald*, the first day she saw one here; and she never reads it at home. It was English, you see. We got so tired of French words all the time. One evening we went ashore, and there were some children playing tag—playing it in real English, too, and one of them called out, ‘*Let me alone!*’ and it sounded so good.”

Mr. Dekker laughed, and asked her how she

thought he would feel when he was on top of a pyramid?

"I'm glad we are going to a country where they speak English. I told father not to go to Italy; that would have been worse still."

Bel spoke shyly: "Perhaps I shall be homesick for my dear French words."

"Do you say your prayers in French?" inquired Ellinor, in a surprised tone.

Bel colored, hesitated, and at last gave an half articulate assent.

"I pronounce my French as it is spelled, which is the common sense way. Mr. Dekker, *do* you think French people *are* as bright as Americans?" Ellinor asked, argumentatively.

"I read a bit about French women this morning from an old magazine I found in my bag. It said that women here have a part in the circumstances that make history. They have been for centuries the companions of men—"

"I think that makes them bright," interrupted Ellinor.

"Nell, what do you know?" laughed Janet.

"I know *that*," said Nell. "Men tell you things—like Mr. Dekker."

"Mr. Dekker, do you know French?" asked Janet.

"About as well, or as ill as I know a few other things."

"Miss Kellinger, your books are all in your trunks down in the hold, I suppose," said Ellinor; "haven't you left any French books out?"

"No,—yes—only my Testament." Bel hesitated and flushed.

"Isn't it a Bible?"

"No," replied Bel, with perceptible impatience.

"Is your Bible in French?"

"It is not in anything: I have no Bible," was the quick reply, in a constrained tone, that caused Ellinor to give her an inquiring, innocent look, and to wonder why she was displeased.

"How many times have you read it through?" she persisted, ignoring her sister's touch upon her shoulder.

"I have never read it—through."

"Which part do you like best?"

"I do not think I like any of it—much."

"Why, Miss *Kellinger*!" exclaimed the little girl.

"She has not read it. She can judge better after she has read it," Janet hastened to say. "Please excuse Nellie, Miss Kellinger, she forgets that she cannot ask every one the questions she asks me. She is interested in the Bible,

because we are reading it through for the first time."

"Will you read yours through, too?" asked Ellinor.

"Yes, I intend to," said Bel. "I have nothing else to read."

"Can't you read English? You may have our books."

"She understands English well enough to appreciate the English of the Italian who was showing the house where Columbus was born. He said: 'Christopher Columbus used to be born here,' and looked blank when somebody inquired where he was accustomed to die."

Bel smiled—the two girls laughed.

Bel was attired this morning in dark gray cashmere of excellent quality, which she had fitted to herself from a travelling dress her mother had cast aside. Mrs. Kellinger refused to wear a dress the second season, if it had become at all what she called "antiquated." Madame declared that Bel had dresses enough to last until she was thirty, if she would take the trouble to make them over; she wondered sometimes how girls felt in a new dress all their own; her broad gray felt hat, her mother had worn two years ago; she had re-

trimmed it with crimson velvet she had found in the last box of clothing sent to her, and Madame declared that she looked like a beauty in it.

“There should be some compensation,” Bel remarked, as she stood before the glass watching the effect. The girls at Isobel’s side were evidently wearing dresses all their own. Pink and white gingham simply and prettily made; their sun hats were tied under their chins with broad pink ribbon. Round faces, pretty cheeks, blue eyes and light brown hair peeped out from under the tied down hats.

Ellinor chose to dress like Janet. In everything her older sister was her model. When Janet wrote in her journal, Ellinor wrote; when Janet read her Bible, Ellinor read hers; when Janet read Hume, Ellinor read Peter Parley. Ellinor had read Genesis at one reading. She said the Bible was the nicest story-book she had ever read.

Bel began to feel that she would not be ashamed to bring her Testament out into the cabin. Nobody read the Testament at school, excepting at the opening each morning, and Madame rarely read her own English Bible. She knew her mother owned no Bible. There was one

on board her father's ship, but the name of the ship was printed on the cover.

Was it the Bible that made Mr. Dekker himself? She felt that the trip might not be so unpleasant after all; not if Mr. Dekker would talk to her, and Ellinor leave her alone. It would be but a few days, and then she would see her mother. This was only one of the between times; the real, good times would be with her mother.

How wide the world was growing!

How Mr. Dekker happened to be on board, she had no idea; she would certainly listen if Ellinor would ask him where he was going next.

That night in church, she was sure she would never hear him speak again; and now, this morning she had taken breakfast sitting at his side. He had laid a roll upon her plate, and had motioned to the cabin-boy when her coffee was out.

"Havre is a beautiful old city in this sunshine!" said Janet, gazing at the buildings familiar to Bel from her childhood.

"It is always beautiful," returned Bel, proudly.

"O yes, it's pretty, but not as pretty as America," assented Ellinor, carelessly. "There's nothing as pretty as America, excepting the moon."

"Do you think the French side is as pretty as

the Yankee side?" inquired Mr. Dekker, with solicitude.

"Oh, I always wanted to see the other side of the moon," exclaimed Ellinor. "I knew it had another side."

"Now Mr. Dekker!" said Janet.

"I'll tell you about the moon some time—I suppose we shall have a great many talks."

"Of course," said Ellinor, contentedly, "I want to be like the French women—if that is true."

"Miss Kellinger, if we had only known you earlier!" said Janet, "how you might have shown us Havre!"

"I am very sorry." Bel's voice sounded very quiet in contrast; "but papa had not decided then—or perhaps he did not know you were in Havre."

"You are a part of our cargo," cried Ellinor, gleefully. "You are to be shipped to America and consigned to your owners."

Bel stepped away with the slightest curl about her upper lip; and again Ellinor wondered why she should be displeased.

The first day upon the water the sun shone, the air was pleasantly warm, and the three girls walked upon the deck, or sat working or reading in camp

chairs, with Mr. Dekker in his steamer chair not far off.

"Mr. Dekker!" Ellinor dropped her porcelain slate upon the desk, with its finished example in division, and walked over to the steamer chair.

"Does anybody *know*," she asked, "what makes the Atlantic ocean salt?"

"Some people think they know."

"Are you one of them?" she inquired, with unsmiling earnestness.

"I know what some people think."

"Is it too hard for me?"

"Perhaps it is worth while to try and see," he returned, looking up into the serious eyes under the hat; "what do you think is at the bottom of the sea?"

"Mud," was the unhesitating reply.

"What kind of mud?"

Ellinor fixed her eyes upon the deck and meditated; Bel's eyes were upon the lace in her fingers, but they were listening eyes.

"I don't know what kind;—salt?" she ventured, with a laugh.

"Salt mud; I think it is."

"Has anybody ever dug any of it up?"

"A coating of it was found on the lower half of

the recovered Atlantic cable; and the bulk of it was supposed to be formed of carbonate of lime. And how that lime reached the bottom of the sea, I will try to make plain to you. You know the sun shines upon the ocean, and pure water is constantly distilled out of the salt water; the pure water ascends and forms clouds—”

Ellinor nodded; she knew that.

“These clouds drift over the continents and come in contact with certain conditions of the climate and fall to the earth in drops of rain; the rain filters drop by drop through the soil, and forms springs, and the springs overflow into brooks and the brooks run into rivers.”

“Yes,” nodded the child.

“But this river water is not as pure as it was when it fell in drops of rain; it has gathered something in passing through the soil, and thus charged with what it has gathered, which I cannot explain to you now, it runs into the sea.”

“It gathers lime, I guess, and things the earth is made of; I wrote down what the earth is made of. I copied it out of a book.”

“So you see, the saltiness of the sea comes out of the land—or some wise people think so.”

"I wish I could understand the part you didn't tell me."

"Oh, you will some day."

"If you ask questions enough," added her father, with his hearty laugh. "Don't let her bother you, Mr. Dekker."

"I'm glad to be bothered," he returned. "I miss a little girl who bothers me at home."

"Is she your little girl?" asked Ellinor, curiously.

"Yes, she is mine."

Bel's listening eyes were watching eyes, also; they caught the content and the tenderness in his eyes.

"What is her name?"

"Her name is Annie."

"Why didn't you bring her?"

"Surely enough! Why didn't I? Chiefly because she is too young."

"Does she have to stay with her mother?"

"Yes."

Ellinor went back to her slate, Janet turned a page in Macaulay, and Bel counted the stitches in her work.

In the evening a tide of homesickness, if that were the name of it, swept over Bel; the girls had their father; they had him as she had never had

her father; Ellinor sat on his knee with her head on his shoulder and her arm about his neck, and Janet sat near him reading aloud. Mr. Dekker threw himself upon the sofa and fell asleep, under his heavy shawl, his travelling companion by day and by night. Bel sat at the table with her work in her hand, not listening to the reading, not listening to anything but the moan of her own heart.

She had written to her mother, that when she was born hope was left out of her. The happiness of these girls caused her to feel keenly her own desolation; the meeting with her mother, was the prelude to the agony of the long parting and separation; and then, that undefined dread was upon her again, for her mother had written that she had something to talk to her about, that would not be pleasant to her; but she must bear it like a good girl.

Mr. Dekker had said something about shocks, and being prepared; she could not remember it. If she only dared to awaken him and ask him; but she would never dare to ask him anything. He was kind to her, and he often smiled when he discovered that she was gazing at him; but he did not talk to her as he talked to Ellinor or Janet.

The appeal in her eyes touched him every hour. The captain had told him that her mother was a frivolous, extravagant piece, and her father, a scapegrace.

“My heart would break if my girls had nothing better. There’s a grandfather somewhere, but what’s a grandfather!”

“I had a grandfather — grandfathers are a great deal. When I was two years old all I had was a grandfather.”

The yellow head under the shawl was motionless; the light from the swinging lamp shone over his closed eyes and full reddish-yellow beard; the temples were thin, the high forehead might have been modelled in wax, and have had more the tint of life. Bel thought he must be very ill.

She wished the little girl and her mother were with him.

V.

RHIZOPODS.

THE second day the white cliffs of England were in sight. Wrapping themselves up well about the middle of the morning, the girls went up on deck; Mr. Dekker, protected by overcoat and shawl, was lounging in his steamer chair, with his soft dark felt hat slouched over his eyes; his Bible and note book were peeping from the folds of his shawl.

Ellinor ran to him and stood at his side, with her hand upon the arm of his chair; Janet drew Bel's arm within her own, and they paced up and down. A coop had been rudely built upon the deck; the girls stopped before it to look at the thirteen hens and comment upon each one. Janet caught at any suggestion that might serve as a topic of conversation; she was finding Miss Kellinger very silent, and hard to become acquainted with; Ellinor declared that she was proud, and "huffy at something all the time."

"I believe that every created thing has a noise of its own;" remarked Janet, as one of the hens began to cackle over the treasure of her newly laid egg.

"I do not believe fishes do," said Bel.

"I wonder if they *do* have a sound of their own," exclaimed Janet, "I will ask Mr. Dekker."

"He may not know," said Bel, detaining her.

"Then he will say so," answered Janet, turning away from the hen coop. "It does not trouble him to speak to him."

Bel withdrew her arm from Janet's, and withdrew herself to the head of the steamer chair, while Janet propounded her question.

"O yes," interrupted Ellinor, "I want to know that, too."

"Happily, Miss Janet, you are not the first person who has thought of it. Dr. Dufosse has been studying the phenomenon of sound or voice in fishes, giving the French Academy of Sciences the benefit of his studies. Dr. Dufosse recognizes three classes of sounds produced by fishes."

"I never heard any kind," announced Ellinor.

"You may not have given the subject as close attention as Dr. Dufosse," said Mr. Dekker, smiling up into her hat. "He shows that one class of

sound is voluntary and expressive; some fishes can give forth a sound that can be heard at a distance of several yards; but when many utter the sound together it can be heard at a much greater distance."

"I am glad they can express themselves in some fashion," said Bel. "One would burst if one were angry and could not find a vent."

"I never thought of their having any emotion to express; but I wouldn't like to think they were angry and could not 'kick,' said Mr. Dekker. "It would be rather hard on them. But why did you think of anger as one of their emotions?"

"Because it is so often one of my own," returned Bel, smiling, and bringing her face within range of his eyes.

"You look fierce," he said. "I knew you had a temper."

"So did I," said plain spoken Ellinor. "She has been mad at me two or three times."

"Those cliffs are wonderful things," Mr. Dekker remarked, taking Ellinor's cold fingers into his gloved hands. "I wonder if you know what they are made of."

Bel had withdrawn herself again behind the steamer chair, with a resentful light in her eyes.

That saucy little thing! She would like to box her ears!

"They look like stone, or chalk," ventured Ellinor.

"Did you ever hear of the tiny animals called Rhizopods?"

"Never," replied Ellinor.

Bel would have walked away, but that it would seem discourtesy towards Mr. Dekker. Why did he never tell her anything, or notice her; why must it always be Ellinor or Janet?"

"They are exceedingly small; they inhabit the tiniest shells; many of them are nearly as large as a grain of wheat. Do you know how large or how small that is?"

"O yes," answered Ellinor, with her confident little nod. "I have seen wheat threshed on a farm where we go in summer."

"But the greater number show merely as fine dust. Think how small they must be! The Rhizopods are of different shapes; some round, some spiral. Sometimes there are several shells in one mass; a separate animal inhabits each shell. The little fellow has not even a mouth or a stomach; he can absorb food at any part of his body. They live in the ocean in vast numbers; tens of millions

always coming into existence and tens of millions always going out of existence. They live their little lives and die and sink down to the floor of the ocean—”

“Just as the stuff that makes salt does,” Ellinor could not forbear interrupting. She fastened her facts together with a chain, and then wound the chain around inside of her memory—she said:

“Down there on the ocean bottom are heaped up their skeletons or shells, layer upon layer, layer upon layer. For a long time it was suspected that these white cliffs were built in this manner, and now the fact is proved; for mud has been dredged up from the bottom, composed of layers of these tiny shells, that had dropped by myriads and become fastened together in one huge mass.”

“But how do the cliffs get *up*—out of the water?” inquired Ellinor, as the question was forming itself upon Bel’s lips.

“The mass of shell has been upheaved, slowly or suddenly, no one knows how—at the word of command.”

With reverent and curious eyes each one gazed long and silently at the white cliffs.

“Are these chalk cliffs anywhere else?” Janet asked.

“O yes, they extend from Ireland, through England and France, and as far as the Crimea; in the south of Russia they are found six hundred feet thick; yet one cubic inch of chalk is calculated to hold the shells of more than one million rhizopods.”

Even silent Bel was moved to utter an exclamation of delight and wonder.

“What tiny creatures, to make such wonderful work!” she said, after an instant.

“And, oh, dear me, the *time*!” cried Janet.

“The Master Workman has plenty of time for all his co-workers,” replied Mr. Dekker, in his quietest tone. No one had noticed the shadow that rested on his face, lurking in his darkened eyes, but now, at some unspoken comfort in his own words, the shadow was lifted, his eyes seemed to grow larger, as well as clearer and brighter.

His eyes shone very blue under the shaggy cliffs of his eye-brows, a moustache of reddish-gold shaded his lips, and a beard, slightly darker, fell over his breast. Ellinor had said that morning that he was all beard and hat and shawl.

Isobel thought she would like to know how much time he had had to build himself.

“All the same—I am glad I wasn’t made a

rhizopod instead of a girl," said Ellinor, in her tone of announcing a discovery; "those cliffs are big and splendid, and I'll never help make anything half as grand!"

"O yes, you will! You have yourself to build," was her sister's quick reply.

Bel smiled; she had never heard a young girl talk in Janet's style. An hour's conversation between the two sisters had amused her that morning. Ellinor had been full of questions, and Janet full of wise answers; Bel supposed some of her quotations came from the Bible.

"The literal meaning of the name of these tiny builders, these chalk and limestone makers, is Root-foot."

"Because they are at the root of the foot!" said Janet. "Now, Ellie, you know the beginning of the cliffs."

"I do not believe I should care so much about the Root-foots, if I couldn't see the cliffs right before my eyes. Oh, now I know, Mr. Dekker! This is another good of travelling. Shall you go to the root-foot of everything as you travel along?"

"Hardly—one life-time would not suffice."

"The rhizopods live such a little time," said

Bel; "they die, and cannot see what they have builded."

"The Master Builder sees."

"I think I want to see myself. I want to see the end of things."

"So we may. We are not rhizopods. They were made for us. They are a part of the fulness of the earth—and the meek shall inherit the earth."

"Only the meek?" asked Bel, jealously.

"The promise is to them."

"Then the earth is not my inheritance."

"It is not written: 'They who are born meek shall inherit the earth.' "

"I do not know what is for me—yet."

"You have not had very much time to discover." He looked up with a smile to meet her timid questioning eyes. He had not told her that she was one among his listeners whom he had singled out to talk to that Sunday night. After a moment he pulled off his glove and opened his note-book to jot down something.

"You will have to get another book before you go all around the world," observed Ellinor.

"More than another, I hope."

Ellinor moved away to the side of the ship and

stood gazing intently into the water, seeking to discover a rhizopod. The captain came up the stairs from the main deck, and spoke sharply to the man at the wheel. Janet drew Bel away, and they walked up and down conversing in low tones.

“We are having a fine run to-day, Mr. Dekker,” said the captain. “What *you* need is to be salted through.”

“So my physician said.”

Ellinor went down to the cabin and wrote in her journal; she wrote in her journal half a dozen times a day.

“English Channel, Aug. 13. I have done twenty-one sums in algebra to-day, and learned what the white cliffs are made out of. Miss Kellinger begins to talk some. Her eyes are just lovely.”

VI.

THE NORTH SEA.

"COME up quick and see Dover!" shouted Ellinor down the stairway.

The cabin door was open leading into the square passage, and Bel heard each word distinctly, but she did not stir. It was a luxury to be alone in the cabin, as she had been the last half hour. She had been reading in French, the chapter in the New Testament that Mr. Dekker had read in English at family worship.

This family worship was one of the great pleasures of the day to her. She thought Mr. Dekker prayed out of her own heart. In his prayers he answered some of her questions.

"We've got the glass. We can see Dover Castle," was Ellinor's excited announcement two minutes later.

With some impatience Bel arose, and went into her state-room to wrap up warm, and then

started leisurely for a view of Dover and Dover Castle.

"Why didn't you come sooner?" rebuked Ellinor, as Bel staggered through the doorway of the house on the quarter-deck out on the deck. Captain Dermott met her, giving her his arm, and led her to the ship's side where Mr. Dekker and the girls were standing.

"Do you know all about the Castle?" inquired Ellinor, clinging to her father's disengaged arm.

"No," said Isobel, releasing herself from the captain's protection. "Thank you, sir."

"I don't believe you want to know," pouted Ellinor. "I don't think *you* are a very good traveller."

"I acknowledge that," said Bel, smiling under her broad hat, and holding it on with both ungloved hands.

"Is your little girl a good traveller?" Ellinor inquired.

She was clinging to Mr Dekker's arm with both hands.

"She has travelled in Europe and America; I think she is."

"Didn't she want to come now with you?"

A very serious "no" was the reply.

"Had she seen enough?"

"For the present. She preferred to go to college."

"Oh, I thought she was *little*. You said so," cried Ellinor, disappointedly.

"She is little and young. She is not seventeen."

"I think that is *old*," said Ellinor, decidedly.

The captain's eyes were scanning the horizon. "There's a thunder-storm coming up. We shall see a fine sight."

As the Goodspeed entered the North Sea, the storm clouds hung directly overhead; the sun was shining on either side of the dense mass; the white cliffs stood out staunch and still over the darkened water. Over the French side, the home side to Bel, who was watching with her heart in her eyes, rosy clouds were floating. France was in the sunshine. Her France would always be in the sunshine. The rain fell gently, the rain-drops danced upon the water, the lightning played among the black clouds, and the thunder burst in long, echoing peals.

"I said 'twould be a fine sight," remarked the captain. "I've seen it before—just here."

As they were watching the shower, a Bremen

ship passed, bound down the channel; a lady and gentleman upon the deck waved their handkerchiefs in friendly greeting. Bel pulled off her hat and swung it; the gentlemen lifted their hats. Janet and Ellinor waved their handkerchiefs, shouting: "Good-bye! Good-bye!"

"They will get to America before we do," said Ellinor, disconsolately.

"Every ship is not bound to America, child," answered Janet.

"Ours is, though," said Ellinor, "and every knot away from America is one knot nearer. Isn't that a—a—paradox?"

"Haven't you a grandmother, Miss Kellinger?" inquired Janet.

"I do not know," said Bel, crimsoning, "I did not ask Mr. Dekker. No one ever told me."

"Mr. Dekker!" exclaimed puzzled Janet, "does *he* know your relatives?"

"Another Mr. Dekker!" explained Bel, smoothing her wind-tossed hair; "he came from America; he was studying in Oxford, he lived near my grandpapa."

"Not Perez Dekker," was Mr. Dekker's surprised exclamation. "He had work to do for his college in England last summer. Did *he* call upon you?"

"Oui, Monsieur," said Bel; then, with a little laugh, she said, "yes, sir."

"Perez Dekker is my cousin; our fathers were brothers; my grandfather had the care of me and he was across the continent. He is very dark, with eyes one is not likely to forget, and long hair."

"Yes," said Bel, with a smile, as she recalled his eyes and hair. "He has a sister—they live alone, with each other, opposite my grandpapa's house in the country."

"And you are going *there*! I hope you will see a great deal of him. His work is among young men; but he lectures occasionally to young ladies. We were at Yale together in the same class; then he came to Germany. We do not altogether approve each other, but we have a strong feeling for and with each other."

"Why doesn't he approve you?" asked Ellinor, with quick indignation.

"Oh, he thinks I might have done better," was the light reply.

"Has he done better?"

"He makes more money; he has something of a position. I worked two years in a country parish before I had rested from the seminary where I suf-

ferred from overwork. I never had any physical strength to speak of. I was not wise."

"I shouldn't think he *would* approve you," commented Ellinor, severely. "But you wouldn't have been here but for that."

"No."

Bel went down into the cabin, thinking that she had learned something about her new companion, and with a hope that some day she might see him in that house opposite her grandfather's. If he had only come instead of that other one !

The next day a drizzling rain fell all the morning, and the girls were kept prisoners in the cabin. Janet was never idle ; her books and work were always at hand. Ellinor chatted to her own heart's content, if sometimes to the discomfort of the others ; studied her lessons, and played games by herself on the slate.

As soon as prayers were over, Mr. Dekker excused himself and went into his state-room. Bel had no book beside her Testament ; although reading it with a new and vivid interest, she felt too shy, or too ashamed of her emotion over it to read it for any lengthened time in the presence of the others. She liked to drop her head into her hands and think, when moved by an incident or a

phrase, and this would be a strange thing to do when not alone. Ellinor would be sure to ask if her head ached, or if she might do something for her, and Janet would look sympathetic. It would seem unkind to seclude herself, as Mr. Dekker so often did; and then, why should she not love to be with these girls?

She had looked over their small library and was not desirous to read any of their books. An hour or two over each of them had been sufficient. Her lace was finished, and she had no material for other work. Their work consisted in knitting, mending stockings and making flags. Their own fingers were enough for their work. She would not offer any assistance; still she looked down at her own idle fingers this morning, smiling as she thought of what Madame would say to her. Madame had suggested material for work, but she had replied that she had no money to buy anything. She had no letter paper; she could not write to her or Lizette. If she only had a blank book like Janet's. She had kept a diary at school, and hated it; but distasteful work was better than no work at all. It would keep her from remembering that she must leave mamma, and that mamma had something to tell her. She was not being brave or

good; she had never felt so wicked in her life. She was all wrong, and that meant more wrong than she knew.

Mr. Dekker emerged from his seclusion as the steward entered to lay the cloth for dinner, and then the life and brightness began for her. It began and lasted all through the afternoon.

The hour after dinner was the lazy hour for the workers. The captain stretched himself on the sofa, with his tarpaulin on his knees, Mr. Dekker leaned back in his steamer chair, speaking or silent as the mood was upon him, a sympathetic presence either speaking or silent; Janet was reading leisurely, and for the fourth time, a tattered copy of Nelson's "Cause and Cure of Infidelity." It was more interesting than a story-book to herself and her little sister. She had taken it from her trunk for the present reading. Bel caught a glimpse of a page over her shoulder, and for an instant became spell-bound. *That* was a book she would read.

Ellinor was finishing her "Rollo's Travels" for the seventh time, and yawned over the last sentence.

"Oh. Mr. Dekker!" in a tone of pathetic patience, "I *don't* know what to do next!"

"Oh, Miss Ellinor," in comical imitation of her distress, "can I help you find out?"

"I want to *do* something."

"So do I. That is what is consuming me."

"You do not look consumed," she cried, in a livelier voice, dropping her book and dropping herself on the carpet near his feet. "Will you tell us things?"

"O yes, anything," opening his eyes to smile at her eagerness.

"May I ask you all the questions I want to?"

"May I answer only those I want to?"

"O yes, certainly."

Bel and Janet were sitting on the long cushioned seat at the other side of the table. Bel was writing her name on Ellinor's slate; Janet closed her book and unrolled the long blue sea-stockings she was knitting for her father. The pink gingham had been exchanged for blue merinos. Bel was still in her travelling suit. Mr. Dekker had put on, to-day, a long dressing-gown of dark blue, faced with silk of a lighter hue, and tied about the waist with dark blue cord and tassel; upon his feet were black velvet embroidered slippers. Ellinor's fingers were picking at the roses on the slippers.

"Did Annie make the slippers?"

"Yes, and her mother made the gown. They were given me the day I left home, six months ago."

"They are very pretty. Do they write to you?"

"Yes, Annie writes, and her father and her mother."

"I thought *you* were her father!" cried Ellinor, in exceeding surprise; "*you said* she was your little girl."

"Did you think I was forty years old?"

"Ain't you?"

"I am not thirty."

"You look old," decided the child. "How is she your little girl then?"

"Because she has given herself, and her father and mother have given her—to me."

"Oh," with an expression of enlightenment. Janet looked at Bel and both smiled.

"Mr. Dekker, may I be what Janet calls *personal*?"

"If you will allow me the same kind privilege."

"How old *are* you, then?"

"Not twenty-nine, as Americans count."

"Why, how do they count?"

"We reckon from the day of one's birth."

"There aint any other way."

"There is the Chinese way."

"What is that?"

"They do not reckon from the day of one's birth, but from New Year's day."

"How dreadful funny!"

"A young Chinaman would not feel as discomposed as I did at being asked my age in the presence of these young ladies; the question is not a delicate one with them; even the refined and elegant will ask a stranger, just introduced: 'What is your honorable age?'"

"I'll imagine we are in China, then. I want to know if you are rich. We think you must be."

"Nell!" chided her sister.

"I am very rich, but I have not a great deal of money. To be rich in America one must have a great deal of money."

"Have you enough?"

"More than enough."

"Do you have to work for it?"

"No, it was worked for before I was born; all I had to do to get it was to be born."

"Is it in ships?"

"Ellinor Dermott!" rebuked Janet.

"No."

"And you *aint* married, then?"

“Not yet.”

“When will you be?”

“Now, Ellinor, you must stop,” said Janet.

“Mr. Dekker, why do you encourage her?”

“For her amusement and my own.”

“I think it is spoiling her,” said Janet, indignantly.

“I am spoiled already,” said Ellinor, unconcernedly; “please answer me, Mr. Dekker.”

“When I am well and strong and Annie is through college.”

“Has she a sister?”

“Like me, unhappily, she is an only child.”

“Is *she* rich?”

“Her father is in a good business.”

“Is she pretty?”

“Do you think so?”

From an inner pocket he drew a case containing a painting upon ivory, and laid it in Ellinor's hand.

“Oh, how beautiful!” she exclaimed.

Janet bent forward; Bel thought jealously of her lovely face in ivory.

“She has laughing black eyes, full of witchery; she is the very spirit of merriment; she has never had a shadow over her happy and beautiful life.”

It was a beautiful face, the laughing light in her eyes had been caught and kept in them.

"She has the only *arch* face I ever saw."

Bel looked at it, studying it; it was not as lovely as Hope Devoe's face; this was a girl's face, *her* face was a woman's face.

"May I show you something?" she asked.

The case was in her pocket; she would not entrust it to her trunk; she touched the spring and put it into Mr. Dekker's hand.

"That is very sweet," he said, "she is older than Annie."

"Oh, yes."

"Who is she?" asked Ellinor, bringing her short-sighted eyes down close to it.

"My mother's cousin. I never saw her, I never shall see her; she is dead."

"Is your mother like that?" asked Janet.

"Oh, no; mamma is dark and splendid."

"*You* are something like your picture, Miss Kellinger," said Ellinor, "you have that kind of eyes and hair."

"I could not be," said Bel, simply.

The pattering of rain drops overhead had ceased, the sun had burst out and was shining over their heads down through the skylight.

Mr. Dekker returned the picture to its hiding place, with a smile in his eyes, thinking of her last freak, the sprite!

In a letter that he had received upon his arrival in Havre was enclosed an unsealed envelope, with the superscription: "To be read one month after you have received it."

Some little bit of mischief! Some pleasant surprise! The two letters he had since received, were not as frank and confiding as the others, and yet there was an air of unrestraint about them that the others had not had; was the child becoming changed with the increase of the distance between them? He had known her all her life, and called her his little wife before she was five years old; they had been like brother and sister for so many years; it was only when he found that he must leave her that he discovered his long love toward her. And she had been so grieved, and said she would be lost without him, and had promised, with the most serious look he had ever seen in her eyes, that she would marry him when he came back.

She had been ill since he had left her; her mother had written that something seemed to be on her mind, and the physician had urged change. Was it that she missed his companionship?

Would it be better for them both to go back and bring her to share his rest and travel? Her father would not consent; his consent to the engagement had been hardly won, and how could he, but for the child's sake, snatch her away from her mother?

Would she come with him; would she leave her father and mother? She was such a child still, he thought tenderly.

The captain opened his eyes—he had not been asleep, and looked at Mr. Dekker.

“Mr. Dekker, I do not know whether I am saved or not.”

Bel gave him a startled glance.

Janet did not lift her eyes from her work; her father's “doubts” were not new to her.

“Do you know whether you love God or not?”

“Yes, I am sure of that.”

“Do you choose his will?”

“Yes, I am sure of that.”

“Have you given yourself to his service?”

“Over and over.”

“Do you know why? *Because you are saved*; all these things grow out of the forgiveness of your sins. Does an unforgiven man love God's self and God's will? Is a lost man so *found*?”

The captain sprang to his feet and pushed his tarpaulin down upon his head. Five minutes later, he tapped upon the sky-light and called: "Girls! girls! come up, if you want a sight of land."

Beside the glimpse of land, which he supposed to be Flamborough Head, he had called them to see another sight — seventy-five vessels with sails set. That evening Ellinor wrote in pencil in her journal: "I am so glad, we are almost to England. We counted seventy-five vessels to-day, large and small and middle-sized. I must not forget to tell father to buy 'Pilgrim's Progress' and some candies when we get in. It is very cold. I never was so far north before. We have just had supper. Ham, and salt beef, and potatoes, and dried peaches, and bread, and cake and tea and coffee. Miss Kellinger is so glad of: 'Cause and Cure of Infidelity.' Janet likes it better than any book she ever read. Father says I read it as if it were a story book. I like it. Mr. Dekker says Janet and I are real Yankee girls. We are Scotch, too. He looked surprised because we liked that book."

"Miss Kellinger, can you *think* in French?" inquired Janet.

"Can you *think* in English, Miss Janet?" inquired Bel, a slow and surprised smile dawning in her eyes.

Mr. Dekker tossed aside his book and touched Ellinor's arm: "O Miss Ellinor," in a tone of exaggerated appeal, "I *wish* you and your folks loved me and my folks, as well as me and my folks love you and your folks. For sure, there never was folks, since folks were folks, that ever loved folks half so well as me and my folks love you and your folks."

VII.

IN THE NIGHT.

EVERY girl had somebody, every girl beside herself knew what would happen next, every girl beside herself belonged somewhere.

If she might only sail on and on, and never come to land! Then mamma would never tell her that dreadful thing and send her away.

Ellinor had fallen asleep in her father's arms, and Janet had kissed him good-night. They had all bidden her good-night very kindly, and she had crept into her berth with burning cheeks over the first part of that true and most wonderful book that would influence every day of her life. If she dared she would ask her father to buy it and read it; had not Madame called him an "unbeliever?"

And then she began to think about Jesus as she had learned of him in her Testament. He was in a ship a great many times. Once he was

asleep on a pillow, and there was a great storm. She had read about it that evening.

“Mais il était à la poupe, dormant sur un oreiller; et ils le réveillèrent, et lui dirent: Maître, ne te soucies-tu point que nous perissions?”

He did care then. He did not permit them to be hurt. Did he care now, too?

She was not afraid on the ship, but she was afraid of coming to land, and of what would meet her there. For the first time she shrank from meeting her beautiful mother.

And then she remembered that Jesus was on the land with his disciples, and knew everything that happened to them. With this comfort she fell asleep, awaking soon afterwards with a start. She had dreamed that her mother was not her own mother, and that was why she was sending her away.

Madame's words to Mademoiselle when she was a little girl came back to her: “There is some mystery. I do not believe she is her own mother.”

Tears were on her cheeks. In her agony she was crying out: “Mamma, mamma!”

The ship was rolling. With both hands she clung to the side of her berth. Through the ventilator over the door she discerned the dull light

of the swinging lamp in the cabin. There was no one in the cabin; the state-room was stifling and dark. Why might she not put on her red wrapper and go out and read awhile?

She had never been happy in the dark. When the moon was not shining in her chamber, Madame had always kept a lamp burning for her.

It would be strange, but it was not wrong. It was not like breaking the rules at school, as she had done times unnumbered. They were all asleep. No one would discover her, and she would not speak of it.

Before she had fairly reasoned herself to this conclusion, she was on the floor, feeling around for her shoes. With chattering teeth she hurried on her clothing; the dream and the darkness made her very desolate.

Turning the door knob with shaking fingers, she peered all around before she dared step out into the dim light of the cabin lamp.

Overhead footsteps were heavy, and a rough voice, not the captain's, was shouting the word of command; she staggered with the motion of the ship, down the cabin to the sofa.

Janet's cloak was thrown over one arm, and the blue woollen hood that Ellinor had found in the

depths of the trunk that day. The captain's tarpaulin was on the carpet, half concealed by the ragged American flag that Ellinor was ripping to pieces.

None of these things were like home. In the pale light of the swinging lamp they were more strange than they had appeared in the day time. The strangeness added to the chilliness and desolation; she shivered from head to foot out of sheer nervousness; the light revealed nothing comforting, her pillow and the darkness were less suggestive of all these unfamiliar things. Had she somewhere lost herself?

Oh, for Lizette's bright, dark face, and dear French words. Oh, for Madame's placid voice, or petty fault-finding! Oh, for her desk at school, and her hated, small room! Oh for Lucy, and the garden, and her mother!

With a sob that choked her because it could not come, she sank down on the mass of bunting and dropped her head on Janet's cloak. As she moved her hand she touched something; it felt like a letter. Lifting her head she espied several letters, some in envelopes and some the folded sheets of papers.

They would be something to look at, something

to amuse her. She was interested in studying penmanship ; these were all addressed to Rev. Prosper Dekker.

One unsealed envelope bore a queer inscription : "To be read one month after you have received it."

Had he read it yet ? What a strange thing for somebody to do ! It was very thin ; the envelope was thin also. Holding it up she could trace the writing upon the inside ; the outside was prettily written ; Annie must have written it. It was a last word of good-bye, perhaps.

As she toyed with it, amusing herself with conjectures, a step somewhere startled her. She gave it a jerk and tore the envelope ; the step was in the outer cabin. The same instant she heard the voice of the cabin boy. In dismay she looked down at the torn envelope. What would Mr. Dekker think ? How could she conceal the rent ? In her hasty attempt to press the parts together a part of the written sheet was pulled into the full view of her eyes : "I almost died—" and then her fascinated eyes caught other words : "promised before I knew what I was saying"—"Mother said I must tell"—"so ill"—"heart-broken"—"young and foolish"—"forgive me"—"little sister again."

Bel groaned in shame and sorrow and penitence; what had she done? What had she been surprised into doing? In her shaking fingers the small sheet was drawn out of the torn envelope. It seemed to fall out of its own will; the envelope parted, and there it was in her hand; how much of it had she done herself? Had she done a mean thing? Had she got up in the night to be a thief? Had she read what his eyes had never seen? Did she know his secret? Had she been untrue to him in the night when he was asleep?

She sprang to her feet with the letter and envelope still held guiltily in her fingers, her only impulse to screen herself. For one overwhelming instant she wished that the ship would go to the bottom and hide the letter and herself.

The stove door stood open—the mass of coal at the top was still alive; the desire to destroy the letter and so prevent what, in her unreasoning fright she felt to be her instant detection, became overpowering; should she lay it on the coals? Then he would never discover that she had torn it and read it! Then he would not read it himself! Might she not keep it from him? Might Annie not change her mind? And then the envelope and the small closely written sheet tumbled over the

coals, and dropped of itself—she did not drop the envelope — and both were shrivelling with the heat before she knew what she had done.

It was too late to interfere ; she watched the kindling of the flame, relieved that it was too late, before the thought burst upon her, that he might miss it and inquire for it.

The ship gave a sudden lurch and sent her with arms extended across to her state-room door ; her berth and the darkness had become a welcome protection. Not thinking to remove her clothing she climbed up and rolled in, hiding her head under the blanket.

Her eyes were staring wide open ; were the other letters scattered about ? How could she meet him in the morning ? Where could she flee when he asked if any one had been up in the night ?

She had been so quick, she always was so quick. What harm would the torn envelope have done ?

She had never done anything quite so shameful in her life ; her deceptions about lessons and broken rules and stolen fruit and cake, had never been quite so wicked as this.

How could she go out to them in the morning ? Miss Janet would never have done anything like

this; even that flyaway Ellinor would be shocked at such a thing.

The tramping feet overhead grew heavier; ropes were creaking; that voice was shouting again. Would the ship go down?

If she had burnt the letter for *his* sake, there might be a shadow of excuse for her; but that was an after-thought; and he might have read it; and burning it had done him no good. He would have to know some day that she had taken her promise back. Would it be a shock? Would he be prepared, as he had said that night? How could she prepare him? She was too wicked to read that book to-morrow; it would be Sunday; it might be Sunday already; what could she do with herself all day long? "O, mamma, mamma!" she cried at last, "I can't stay with you; nobody wants me."

The sweet face of Hope Devoe could not look upon her nor speak to her; all the motherhood she knew was in Isobel Kellinger, her mother's cousin, who had never loved her and who did not love her mother's daughter.

Isobel Kellinger loved no one beside herself; she had never loved her mother with any fondness, and had but a half-hearted, selfish affection for her only sister. Her father had deserted her mother

when his two daughters were little children ; her mother had not loved her because she was like her father in appearance and disposition. When a child she said to her mother : “ You are so cross and ugly I should think my father would go away. I wish I could go away too.”

In her youth and womanhood her one desire concerning trouble had been to run away from it, never to bear it, and least of all, to share the sorrow of another. Marietta Devoe had been forced to admit that her sister was wholly selfish ; she did not believe that she had ever had an unselfish emotion or performed an unselfish action in her life. “ O mamma,” sobbed poor Bel.

VIII.

ANOTHER ISOBEL.

THIS night, as the girl sobbed out "mamma," the mother, as sleepless as she, sat before a coal fire in a chamber in a handsome house in Shields. She had written to Bel that she would meet her there, and then, had anticipated the reception of her letter, by starting the next morning. She might as well be in one place as another; perhaps she could find cheaper lodgings in Shields. The consideration was a motive for starting. She seized upon anything that *moved* her. She was wearied unto death. She would have been glad to bury herself if she could have done it without dying.

She had walked the floor wringing her hands, with hot, angry, baffled tears flowing down her cheeks, and then, exhausted, sunk into a chair before the fire.

Her life was not half lived through, and she had come to this! Long ago she had ceased to love

her husband; his presence, for years, had been constant irritation. He had left her very much to herself, allowing her to choose New York or Liverpool, Hamburg or Genoa, as her place of residence: now and then insisting that she should accompany him upon his voyages, lavishing money upon her or altogether withholding it as her mood or his suited him.

He had loved her after he lost Hope, his young, simple, loving wife. He had loved her through the capricious years of their married life. He loved her still, with a persistency that sometimes touched her. Despite the love and its almost vehement manifestation, she was happier away from him. To-night she remembered and cherished with resentment, his small exactions, his jealousy, his tyranny, his selfishness in putting his own convenience before her comfort, and then, most wearing of all, the constant, "Hope would not do that."

"Hope was a little fool," she had thrown back at him one day.

"She was, when she trusted me," he said, bitterly enough.

Hope was a "little fool," if simplicity, forgetfulness of self, and an adoring love of her husband, constituted a lack of wisdom.

She *was* a little fool when she fled from her father, to a man her father despised. She died bewailing her foolishness. Many tears dropped during her last days, upon the page of her Bible where it was written, "O God, thou knowest my foolishness."

Isobel Kellinger, in her own eyes, was not a fool; she prided herself upon her worldly wisdom.

In her life she said, "There is no God," but she did not, therefore, regard herself as a fool. Her husband said it in his heart, and in his life.

In her own right, a right her husband had never interfered with, she had an income of six hundred dollars. This she had spent upon herself, with constant demands upon her husband to pay her bills.

"Travelling and hotel fare is so expensive," she pleaded in excuse.

"I have my daughter to support," he often urged.

"I dress her," she answered; "when has she cost you anything for dress?"

She threw her book aside, the translation of a French novel, and went again over her tiresome round of reasoning: "Her father has no money, he is sixty years old; worn out, beside, and fit for

nothing but the Sailor's Snug Harbor, where I wish he was. Hope Devoe's child has no claim on me. She will make a fool of herself, like her mother, if she is let alone. I'll tell her the plain truth, that I am not her mother—that I would never let her father tell her the truth. Now the time has come when she must go to her mother's father, for I have not enough for myself, and her father is as good as nobody. A second mate—when he should have retired and have a luxurious home for me.”

If Lucy had lived, she thought sometimes; but Lucy had not lived. If she had, who would have supported her? *She* had no grandfather to fall back on.

Lucy would have had a claim on her; this girl had none, even if she were so foolishly and extravagantly fond of her. It was her beauty the girl loved, and her beautiful dresses, and—she could be fascinating when she chose, and she had chosen to fascinate Bel. She liked to watch the effect of herself upon her enthusiastic and idealizing nature. Caresses and promises had cost nothing, and the poor little thing had been so forlorn and ready to love any one who was kind.

She must tell her that the lovely picture she had

raved about was her own mother. She had searched for it, in vain, in her husband's desk, and had laid it up in her heart against him that he had taken it away to look at and to cheer himself with. On the day of their parting, he to go on a long voyage, and she to go or stay where she would, he had reproached her for her unwifeliness towards him, and unmotherliness towards his daughter, and she had retorted that she hoped she would never have opportunity to show any more of either, for all she wanted was to be rid of them both. He had fixed his eyes upon her with a cold, intense light in them, and putting his teeth together, had said:

"Isobel, I will never come back to trouble you."

"That is too good to be true," she returned with a tantalizing laugh.

"I would like to see my daughter again. You kept me from going the last time I wanted to. She knows very little about her old father, and she will never learn any good."

"You may intrust me to inform her," she said, defiantly. After that he had come to her and kissed her; she did not return the kiss, but she did not, as she had many times, refuse to receive it.

And then he came again, and with his gray

moustache touched her forehead : " Good-bye, dear."

" Good-bye," she said, moved in spite of herself. " I hope you will have a pleasant voyage. I will write to you."

" And where shall I write to you ? "

" Oh, to the moon," with her careless laugh. " I have no idea where I shall go after I have sent that girl home."

He lingered at the door; she arranged her dress, humming a merry air, and he went away with his last thought unspoken upon his lips.

" I will never trouble her again," he muttered, stumbling down the stairs, " the child will be taken care of."

The manner of parting did not trouble her; there had been too many like it, and as she said, he always " turned up again."

Her life was spoiled, and he had spoiled it; he had persuaded her to marry him before his wife had been dead ten months, and, under some kind of infatuation, she had yielded; he was handsome and gay; he promised her that she should never be troubled with the care of his baby daughter, she should have her own way, and all the money he could make and scrape for her. She had quarrelled

with Marietta ; what better thing for herself could she do, and she was fond of him as she had never been fond of any one else. She was "fond of" him ; she had never loved any one in her life ; she would have told you that she had never seen any one worth it.

Now he accused her of vanity and frivolity, and of driving him to desperation with her love of excitement and extravagance.

Was not her list of grievances just as long ?

Had he kept his word ? Who had been troubled with his daughter, if not herself, and where was the luxury he had promised her ? By his dishonesty he had disgraced himself and her ; it was owing to the mercy of his employers that he was not in prison to-night. Was she proud to be the wife of a thief ?

He had cheated one employer after another, and now he was discovered, he might be a common sailor before she saw him again, and she had warned him that his intemperate habits would bring him to that and worse. He had taunted her with being the cause of his seeking to drown his troubles in drink, and told her that she was not the first wife who had brought a decent husband to shame.

He was not the first husband who had brought a shameful name to his wife, she had returned ; he had never told her once that he could not afford to give her the money ; he had growled about it, but she had set it down to his meanness.

But this was all past, and she would have a long breathing spell ; she would have to be economical, but she had friends in London who were as lively as herself, and the winter would not be dull.

After all, how many women were as free ?

Some women, Marietta, for instance, would deny herself the comforts of life, and make herself a perfect martyr for the sake of husband and child. She rejoiced that there was no such stuff in her.

Marietta would say that she ought to take care of her husband in his weak old age ; that she might love him into behaving himself. Bah ! how could she love him, when his breath made her crawl, and when his words were rough and wicked ?

Poor Bel, who had never had a home, would be wild with delight, if she would keep her and live in a small lodging, and perhaps, they both could learn to do something to earn money.

Some women loved to make a home ; she wanted

a home made for her; was not that what husbands and fathers were for?

Would she like to cook her own breakfast and do up her own white dresses? Fancy her fingers stained and her face burnt over the fire!

A child cried out in the next room, a woman's voice hushed it to sleep, and now a man's voice was speaking.

The mother was not young, she was near forty, like herself; her married happiness had come late in life, but her face was sunshine itself, and her voice like a girl's voice; the father was past middle age; he was a clerk in a store among the shipping, but there was a firmness in his tread, and a ring in his voice that young and happy people had; he seemed so glad to be alive.

Her husband would envy that man. He said he had not had a real home since Hope died.

And she? Did she envy that woman, or despise her for being satisfied with such a life?

She would not send away any girl who loved her. She would take her husband's daughter as her own. She would work and do without things.

"I will not do either," she said, aloud, with emphatic deliberation. "There isn't much in this world, but I'll get all I can of it."

In her ignorance and dread of what might be, Bel was afraid of coming to the land. Had she known a part of the truth, how much more would she have been afraid! Had she known all the truth—and how God makes his own use of it, she would not have been afraid at all—no more than you and I are afraid of what is coming next.

IX.

SUNDAY ON SHIPBOARD.

“WAITING must not needs be wearying,” said Prosper Dekker to himself that Sunday morning. “It is *good* that a man should quietly wait.”

He had been awakened before the dawn by something stirring within himself. Was it possible that Annie’s illness was caused, not by wearying for his presence, but because of a hopeless regret that she had been hurried into her promise to him? She was such a child, he reasoned, with a mother’s tenderness for her; she had known no one among her friends to choose from, when she had chosen him, rather when he had chosen her. Had he not fettered her, giving her no liberty to choose for herself?

She was the soul of conscientiousness, and she had been afraid of hurting him when he was ill, and going away so far and for so long. When he knew every twist and turn of her heart, he had

selfishly kept himself from understanding that she had had no thought for herself. She had been pale and quiet the next one day they had had together, and he had attributed the change to her grief at parting with him.

If it were so, what ought he in honor to do?

Go home, learn the truth from her lips, and set the poor little bird free. Might that letter not have something to do with it? Had she broken it to him in this careful way—preparing him?

It was the work of an instant to rise and begin the search for the letter. If he were wrong, if his tired brain were creating wild fancies, he would explain to her and she would pardon this breach of her trust.

The letter. Was it with the others in his inner pocket? Had he looked at it yesterday, or had he laid it away out of his temptation?

His state-room was searched, and then the cabin. The scattered letters were found on the cabin sofa, having slipped from his pocket the evening before, as he lay there awhile before retiring; but this particular letter was not among them. Each envelope, each sheet was shaken and held before the light; but that daintily written envelope was certainly missing.

Every letter in his immediate possession was scrutinized, every book opened, every corner of his clothing and baggage ransacked, but that envelope did not appear. Had he lost it overboard? He had not even shaken his handkerchief overboard. Had it slipped out upon the deck?

In the earliest dawn he was upon the deck, pacing every foot it, with his eyes intent upon every square inch, even pushing a coil of rope aside and getting down upon his knees to feel under a piece of canvas.

"Have you lost anything, sir?" inquired the second mate, whose watch it was upon deck.

"An envelope, unsealed, containing a letter. I cannot imagine where I lost it, or when."

"I should have noticed it. Our eyes are trained to see quickly."

"I have not given it up, but I cannot understand how it can be lost," said Mr. Dekker, in a tone of weary perplexity.

"Have you spoken to the captain, sir?"

"No; and do not mention it. I cannot be rude enough to speak of it. It will be like charging some one under his care of—but, hardly that. It is altogether owing to my unpardonable carelessness. I would rather have lost a thousand

dollar bill—if one can estimate such a loss by money value.”

“I am very sorry, sir.”

“Thank you; but please do not mention it.”

Another and more prolonged search was made in the cabin and among his possessions. With a sigh he threw himself into his steamer-chair. The question was not to be decided to-day, nor for many days probably. There was nothing to do but to write, or take the next steamer home.

And must waiting needs be wearying?

Might it not be preparation? Might he not be so made ready for the shock, that it would hardly be a surprise? The Lord could tell him now; was he telling him now? Was he not opening his eyes that he might rightly interpret her letters?

Was this his grief alone; was it not hers, also? Might she not, to-day, be enduring as much as he?

Dear little Annie, with her laughing eyes, her pretty household ways, her unshadowed life, but for this shadow of his selfish love!

And yet who would keep her life unshadowed as he would do? After all, could any man, any brother, any father, love her less unselfishly?

He would prove it; he would give her back to

herself. Would he write, or would he sail immediately? Would there be any risk to himself? Risk? He sprang to his feet and threw out his arms; was not a new life already flowing through his veins? This touch in his life was like the touch of electricity; his brain and heart were fired; if his selfishness had crushed her, might not his unselfishness save her?

Bel slept late that morning, and when she timidly opened her state-room door they were gathering around the breakfast table.

"Janet wouldn't let me call you," said Ellinor.

"I thank you all," said Bel, with crimsoned cheeks and downcast eyes.

"You don't *look* tired," commented Ellinor, "you look as pretty as a rose."

She had not dared glance toward the sofa; in her imagination the letters were still scattered about: she had not dared meet Mr. Dekker's eye; it was an effort to look at Ellinor.

"Father says we shall be in the Tyne to-morrow, Miss Kellinger," said Janet, "are you as glad as we are?"

"I am *very* glad," returned Bel.

"Mr. Dekker, where shall *you* go next?" inquired Ellinor, as she sipped her coffee.

“I wish I knew; my plans are changed; I am in great perplexity,” he said, with great intensity.

The captain dropped his fork. Janet looked up; Ellinor’s coffee remained unsipped in her spoon. Bel felt as if she were turning into stone, or had turned into it.

“Has anything *happened*?” inquired Ellinor, “how could it? We are not anywhere for things to happen.”

“Only between things,” he said, smiling. “My own carelessness has lost an important unread letter; not having read it I cannot decide upon my plan of action. I think it would upset my old plan of going around the world, or backward and forward as I pleased. I may decide to return to America as soon as possible.”

“With *us*?” cried Ellinor, joyously.

“If you will put on steam.”

Bel thought she did not breathe. It was relief that he did not suspect any one; that he did not suspect *her*; but what should she do now? Permit him to change his plans? Confess the truth? But it would be almost easier to die! She could not do it; it would not hurt him to go to America; Annie would tell him what she had written, and he must know it some time. She was in such

a tangle; it was such a great difference for such a trifling thing to make. But he did not suspect her; she could lift her eyes and laugh again; she had refused coffee, but she would take it now, and she spoke to the boy in waiting as easily as she had spoken yesterday morning.

The sound of her own voice did not frighten her; she would read and enjoy her book and look forward to to-morrow. No one could ever know unless she told the story herself.

Before she was aware, she was laughing at nothing, and when Ellinor asked her what it was, she replied—with the first suggestion that came to her—"If you and your folks only loved me and my folks—"

When the laughter subsided—and the captain had looked sternly at Janet because she was beguiled into laughter on the Sabbath day—Ellinor was ready with another question.

"Mr. Dekker, what shall you do in America?"

"Go to work at something," he replied, gloomily. "I have disobeyed, and I am paying the penalty. The Lord bids his servants work in his vineyard; he never yet bid them *overwork*. It is folly to crowd the work of five years into three, and then, do nothing the remaining two years."

"It ain't common sense," remarked the captain. "I should think college folks would know better."

After breakfast, Ellinor climbed up into one of what she called the "stern window seats" of the cabin, and read Judges through; outside her small window she could see nothing but the water and the foam following the wake of the ship. She sat there only on Sundays. She called it "going to church." Janet stationed herself on the transom, a long seat across the stern, and under the windows, comfortably cushioned, and invited Bel to bring her book and come, too. For two hours Bel kept her eyes upon her book, fascinated, thrilled, believing, awed and yet loving the Creator and Redeemer, of whom it seemed to her, that she was learning about for the first time.

And he was alive to-day, for he *had* risen from the dead. He was as much alive to her as to Mary, to whom he had spoken that Sunday morning in the garden.

He was with Mary in the garden. He was with the disciples in the ship. Was he with her—in the ship—last night? She held her breath, she stifled the sigh; Ellinor must not catch a sound, or she would lift that quick head of hers and ask the inevitable question. Was he with her last night

when she stole that letter and dropped it down among the coals? Why did he not stay her hand? Why did he stand near her and let her be so wicked?

"Mr. Dekker!" She looked up at him,—in his walking up and down, he had reached the transom, near where she sat, and spoke courageously: "I cannot understand why God lets people be so wicked!"

He stayed his steps and stood still, thinking a moment.

"If you were up on the deck with a child three years old, and the little thing was toddling around and came near the steps, would you be afraid it would fall down—over the steps?"

"Not if I were there—near enough to hold it back."

"Suppose the man at the wheel should start forward to catch it, wondering how you could be so heartless to let it go so near danger—into danger, in fact—"

"He would not—if he saw me always there."

"Why not?"

"If he knew it were *my* child, and I could see where it was, and had hands to hold it back, I think he might trust me not to let it go too far."

“Have you answered your question?”

“That God will not let me go too far?”

“Yes.”

“But why does he let me sin at all?”

“If the scarlet fever always stayed in and never came to the surface, how would anybody know it *was* scarlet fever? How could the patient be treated for it? Christ is the Great Physician. He knows you have sin in your heart, but unless it break out in action, how do *you* know it? And if you do not know it, how could you go to him to be healed of it? As soon as he sees the plague spot, he says: ‘That is the *heart*: that has burst out of a heart full of sin. It will not do any good to cleanse the outside, I must go to the root of the disease and take that heart out and give her another.’ As skin diseases are a sure evidence that the blood is impure, so your sin is a sure evidence that your heart is impure. For my part, I am glad when mine breaks out, for it shows me the state of my heart, and then, if I do not go to the Physician it is my own fault. God does permit us to sin far enough to show us that we must go to him—he lets us sin because he has the right, and the power, and the love to forgive us,—just as you have the right to let the child go near danger,

because you can pull it back. Do you know when sin entered the world?"

"With Adam."

"When was that?"

"When he was first made."

"Do you know what happened before Adam was made?"

"No."

"In God's mind and heart Christ was slain for sin. He was slain from the foundation of the world, before Adam sinned—before Adam sinned God knew how he could forgive him. All Adam had to do was to be sorry for his sin, and have it washed out of God's remembrance by the blood that was shed for that very purpose before he sinned. Christ died for you before you were born, that he might forgive your sin. If he loved you like that, do you question his right to permit you to sin?"

"No," with quick assurance.

"And what next?"

"I would not sin any more if I could help it."

"Can't you help it?"

"No, sir; how can I?" with sincere sorrow.

Janet and Ellinor were listening; the captain was wide awake over his Bible on the sofa down at

the other end of the cabin; he had thought of asking the minister to preach to them, but he rather thought this little sermon would do instead.

“I am sure you cannot.”

“Then what can I do about it?” asked Bel, in much distress. She had forgotten herself; she had forgotten last night.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing!” she repeated, startled.

“Only ask God to do something.”

“What shall I ask him to do?”

“Ask him to give you the sorrow for sin and the faith in him that he has had laid up for you since before the foundation of the world, when Christ was slain for Adam’s sin and yours.”

“Is it all there for me?”

“It is all there for you—and for every one who asks for it. It has been there all this time, waiting for you. Christ was slain from the foundation of the world—his forgiven ones have been chosen in him before the foundation of the world—and his kingdom has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world. And, now, in the face of all that, can you not believe that when God permits you to sin it is in his mercy, that you may know you are a sinner, and so go to him for his forgiveness.”

"How did I become a sinner?" she questioned, almost angrily.

"You call yourself an American?"

"I am an American."

"Why?"

"Because I was born in America, of American parents."

"And you are a sinner because you were born a sinner, of sinful parents."

"Is that all the reason? No: it cannot be; I am a sinner because I have sinned."

He walked away. Ellinor went back to Judges, not having asked a single question; Bel's cheeks were burning; now that it was over, she wondered how she had ever dared. But she would never forget; she would think over and over what he had said.

"Where is your Bible? I would like to mark something for you," he said, coming back to her.

Her small Testament was in her pocket; she handed it to him; he faintly lined the place he soon found, and returned it. Ellinor was looking curious.

"Can't I know what it is?" she asked.

Bel read the words aloud:

"Or à celui qui peut vous préserver de toute

chûte et vous faire paraître sans tâche et comblés de joie en sa glorieuse présence."

Her face was alight ; he could keep her from falling as easily as any mother could keep her child at the head of that stairway !

"What is it in English ?" inquired Janet.

Mr. Dekker repeated: "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

Able to keep her from falling and to present her faultless. It was all as wonderful as new.

"He will forgive the past and keep you now and ever, and then with exceeding joy present you before the presence of his father," said Mr. Dekker, in his strong, safe voice.

And all for the asking; that was the most wonderful part of it, Bel was thinking.

"We have to try hard ourselves," commented Ellinor, as if understanding Bel's thought.

"And repent, and forsake our sins," said the captain, in his sternest voice. "If we have done any one a wrong, we must make restitution."

In an instant Bel's cheeks where blanched; the

small volume trembled in her fingers; must she confess *that*? Must she tell Mr. Dekker about it, as well as pray about it?

She could never, never do that! She could restore money, but how could she restore a destroyed piece of paper? she had read so little of it; if she told him a part, she could not tell him all.

As long as he did not suspect her, she had felt that she might be at peace; but now, even if no thought of it entered his mind, could she ask God to forgive her and keep her from falling, unless she made "restitution" to the one she had wronged? To the amazement of them all, she sprang to her feet with a stifled cry upon her lips, and fled to the shelter of her state-room.

"She's queer!" exclaimed Ellinor, decidedly.

"She's worked up about her sins," explained the captain. "It's a good sign. I believe in conviction going deep, and peace not coming too soon. You're a young saint, Mr. Dekker, and I'm an old sinner; take my advice, and don't smooth truths over; repentance has got to be sincere, and forsaking has got to be sure to get those good things laid up since the world begun."

X.

WAITING TIMES.

Two steamers towed the Goodspeed up the Tyne, and before supper time she was anchored at a wharf in the smoky town of Shields. Bel's one thought, crowding down the joy of meeting her mother, was, Mr. Dekker would go to London or somewhere, and she would never see him again. There would be nothing to remind her that she must make "restitution." Perhaps she might slip away from the others and not be compelled to bid him good-bye.

Ellinor called to her to come up on deck. She obeyed reluctantly, for looking up through the skylight she saw Mr. Dekker, standing near it; but Ellinor was impatient, and she had to go. Several strangers were on board; one rosy-cheeked young fellow was in conversation with Janet; Bel wondered at her, and listened; she was talking to him about slavery, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

"What a Yankee girl you are!" thought Bel, with a touch of contempt. "What would Made-moiselle think!"

"It's so good to hear English," cried Ellinor. "Our policemen don't look like those fellows, either. And such funny little ferry boats! How could you stay down there? You will never know how to travel! Will your mother come for you to-day?"

"I hope so. I suppose she will learn that the ship has arrived."

"We shall stay on board; it's cheaper than going to a hotel, and you can stay as long as you want to, you know," comforted Ellinor. "You don't have to feel lost."

"I shall be lost soon," said Bel; "when I go to America, I shall be lost."

"Not if you go with us," said Ellinor confidently.

"I am not sure of that, or anything."

"We can have fires on board, and lights. England isn't like that horrid Havre about such things."

Bel waited up on deck until the lights twinkled through the town. Her mother had sent no address; she had written only that she would come to her.

“She will not come to-night,” said the captain, at the tea table; “she can’t have heard of our arrival.”

“You must stay on the hurricane deck till she comes,” laughed Ellinor, “you know Casabianca did.”

“You will want to go to Newcastle with us to-morrow,” said Janet. “Mr. Dekker is going too. There’s a museum there—and a church, marvelously old, founded before the battle of Hastings, Mr. Dekker says.”

Bel did not look interested; what was church or museum to her? She must flee from Mr. Dekker; and she must have her mother.

“How do you like living on the top of a coal mine, Miss Kellinger?” questioned the captain; “that is what Shields is.”

“I would rather live on top than below,” said Isobel.

“We shall take hundreds of tons home,” announced Ellinor: “the ship has got to go deep in the water.”

She made listless replies all through supper time, and decidedly refused to go up and walk on deck, when Janet began to persuade her. Ten minutes later she regretted it, for Mr. Dekker re-

mained below also, throwing himself at full length into his steamer chair, and taking out his note book to write several letters in pencil upon sheets of paper he found within.

Isobel sat under the swinging lamp, and thought she was reading; she kept her eyes upon the page, and was aware printed words were upon it. Mr. Dekker's fingers were moving so rapidly that she was sure he must have decided upon something.

If he should allude to the lost letter, or to his plans, what would become of her? How could he sit there writing so quietly; how could his voice sound so even and rested; *her* heart was all in a flutter and her lips feverishly dry.

Her mother was in the town among the lights! and she had not seen her for so long! and she must leave her so soon, as soon as those hundreds of tons were stored in the ship; and see her again, when?

"I would almost work under ground in the mines, if I might stay with her."

The words were not in the book; there was nothing in the book; it swayed in her listless fingers and fell into her lap. At the movement Mr. Dekker raised his eyes; he had directed and sealed his letters.

"Do you know anything about the Basques?" he asked, in a voice that seemed to belong to another world.

"The Basques?" she repeated stupidly.

"The Basque province is on both slopes of the Pyrenees; the Basques are French as well as Spanish. Some of them have immigrated to the South American provinces."

"Yes," assented Isobel, not understanding one syllable.

"They claim great antiquity; they make even China rather recent. When some one said to a Basque: "Do you know that my family is a thousand years old?" the Basque returned: "In my family we ceased counting more than a thousand years ago."

A look of interest dawned in Isobel's eyes.

"One of their theories is that they descended from the race that peopled the lost island of Atlantis that Plato writes about. I wonder if you know about Atlantis?"

"No, sir; I never heard of it."

"One of the theories about *that* is that it was the Garden of Eden. Another of their theories is that they are descended from Adam and Eve by the shortest possible line. They are mentioned in

the Commentaries of Cæsar. All school girls read Cæsar."

"I did not read far," said Bel; "I never got *far* in anything."

"The Basques speak the same language and wear the same costumes that their forefathers did when the Roman Emperor was in Gaul."

"Are you going there?" She asked the question with heightened color.

"I wish I might; I would have a glorious time."

The girls were coming down the stairway laughing; Bel hastily opened her book; it would shield her from questions; it was almost impossible to talk to-night, and scarcely easier to listen. To-morrow would bring her mother, or a message; if not, she would feel that she must rush out into the town to find her.

"Mustn't I *ever* notice people's faults?" Ellinor was asking in the passage, in a tone of tearful vexation.

Clearly her sister had been administering rebuke.

"Only that we may avoid them," was the reply, in Janet's peculiarly older-sister tone; "for what other reason should we?"

Isobel had the impression gathered from the con-

versations between the two, that Janet was ready to "preach" at a moment's notice.

And had Ellinor been noticing *her* "faults?"

The captain entered behind the girls and tossed his hat across to the table; he had told Isobel that morning that he had put his "shore clothes" on.

He was a gentleman, Bel supposed, but how different from either of the Mr. Dekkers!

"Mr. Dekker," he observed, "I am looking forward to a good time of thanking God when I get to heaven—if I am so happy as to get there."

"He can hear you now," replied Mr. Dekker, quietly.

"Do you know what makes growing old *hard* to a man?" asked the captain, with the emphasis of one who had been thinking about it. "It is that every year he lives he learns what his mistakes have done for him and other people. Looking backward and seeing how the past has made the present, is enough to set a man crazy, unless he believed in the God who knows how to set things straight."

"We do not need to grow old to discover the result of some mistakes," said Mr. Dekker.

"But you said—" began Isobel, her eyes alight.

"Yes, I said every permitted thing as well as every ordained thing, is in mercy. I almost think I enjoy being in a quandary. It is very interesting to watch the way we are twisted around in it, or led out of it. A man doesn't usually fret himself sick devising plans to assist his lawyer ; so after our Advocate has taken my case into his hands, it is very wise for us to let it alone."

The captain gave one of his hearty assents.

"Mr. Dekker, what are you going to do to-morrow?" questioned Ellinor.

"I think I shall go round the other way," he returned, looking at her seriously.

"Which other way?" asked the captain. "Go east by starting west?"

"An old horse who was used six days in the week in a lime kiln, fell into the habit, when he was let alone Sunday, of getting up at the usual hour, and going to work after his own fashion, which was *going round the other way*. He had learned the best way of resting himself and making himself ready for Monday morning. For a whole year and longer, if need be, I shall go around the way contrary to my old ways for the last ten years. I shall shuffle my old self off."

Each one regarded him in silent amazement.

"I think I would like to learn a trade; at any rate, I shall go to work somehow with my hands. My hands are the contrary way to my brain."

"As if handiwork needed no brains! For shame, Mr. Dekker," cried Janet.

"Not brain work in the same direction, then; my brain shall go around the other way, if that please you better—or shock you less."

"I'd advise you to go to farming," said the captain.

"Capital! Thank you, sir. You've said it for me. I'll go home and buy a small farm."

"Do you know anything about it?" asked the captain, suggestively.

"I was on a farm for the first remembered years of my life; several of them—I know wheat from rye when I see it growing."

"Are you in earnest?" Janet inquired, in indignant surprise.

"Never more so. Your father has said the right thing."

"He always does," said Ellinor.

Going around the world has lost its zest. A farm will be a good place to rest and work between times all my life."

"Do you expect lots of them?" asked Ellinor.

"Lots of them," he repeated. "A friend of mine over-worked and was in the Asylum for the Insane an entire year, and he is doing glorious work now. That was his between times ; my acres will be better."

Between times! That was Madame's way of putting it; the words were not quite familiar to her, but there was a restfulness and a vigor in the ring of them that pleased her. She had done a shameful thing in her between times ; she could not believe that Mr. Dekker ever would do one shameful thing.

"On which side of the world?" asked the captain.

"Oh, in the New World ; I do not relish making a foreigner of myself ; I shall find a green spot on the Atlantic shore ; I know the very place—it is within three miles of the ocean, a short walk ; a long road leads to it with trees on each side ; it is an old, low, farmhouse. It was for sale when I left home ; I spent a vacation there with"—A scarcely perceptible pause, and the name on his lips was changed to "friends."

"It is thirty miles or more from Perez ; he is on grandfather's farm when he is at home. He rests by the way ; there's no break down about him."

“Mr. Dekker,” Bel found courage to ask, “why do you not go to the Basque provinces?”

“Oh, I am too modern ; I am a creature of to-day.” His tone was as lighted-hearted as a boy’s: one listener decided that he could not be very “deep” in his heart, if he were in his brain.

“And when you are rested?” asked Janet, still somewhat indignant.

“The work to which I have been called; there is nothing else in the world for me to do.”

“I am very glad,” said Janet, relieved and satisfied.

XI.

ISOBEL'S MOTHER.

“BEL, don't dawdle about the room ! You make me nervous.”

Bel had not learned the exact translation of “dawdle,” but she felt that she was doing the thing signified : she was looking at things and touching things with aimless fingers and eyes.

Her mother was lying upon the bed, propped up by pillows, in a cream merino wrapper, trimmed profusely with narrow cardinal velvet ; the color was burning deep in her cheeks, her eyes were large and luminous.

“Mamma,” said the daughter, laying aside the bronze paper weight she had been fingering, “I never saw you look so beautiful as you do to-day.”

“Bring me the glass and let me see.”

The flush of gratified vanity with which Mrs. Kellinger surveyed herself, increased the beauty of cheek and eye.

She smiled as she handed the small glass to Bel, and said with a little apologetic laugh: "You know I can't help it."

"Does it make people love you?" asked Bel.

"It makes *you* love me!"

"Yes," said Bel, thoughtfully, "I love you for that, and because you are my *own* mother, more than for anything else."

"You haven't much to love me for, that is true."

"I do not know about mothers; there were none at school, and Lizette had no mother."

"Come and sit down by me; I want to talk to you."

Perching herself on the side of the bed, Bel caught her hand and kissed it; then held it, fondling the pink-tipped fingers.

"Child, you are too French! I don't like such airs. You make me nervous."

Instantly the hand was dropped, and Bel sat coldly upright. "I've got to tell you something before you go home, and I may as well tell quick and get through it. It has kept me awake all night; but don't you go into French hysterics, for if you do, I shall faint away myself. That picture you saw—Hope Devoe—"

"Yes," said Bel, averting her face; for had she not stolen that?

"*She was your mother*, and I am not your mother; and that's why I have let you alone. I was jealous because you are like your mother, and kept your father away. Don't turn so white! Bel!" springing up, and catching her in both arms, "what's the matter? Speak to me! Have I killed you?"

But the girl could not speak; Mrs. Kellinger thought she could not breathe; her head had fallen forward, her eyes were wide open, she was as motionless as if indeed she had ceased to breathe.

The shrieks of Mrs. Kellinger brought assistance from the next room and the floor below; women hurried to and fro with ammonia and mustard and hot water; Mrs. Kellinger was powerless excepting with tears and moans. She had killed her; had killed the one who loved her best; and now she knew her own heart, there was no one in the world to her like this girl, lying there with all the appearance of death.

"It's a dead faint! Did she ever faint before?" asked one of the women.

"No, she was never sick in her life."

"The doctor will be here soon," comforted another woman; "she isn't dead. I have seen people faint before this."

Before the doctor's quick tread was upon the stairs Isobel was lying where her mother had lain, as helpless as an infant, with her eyes closed, and the faint breath touching her lips; the ammonia had brought color to her face, but for that and the still breathing, she might yet be as one dead.

All that day she lay motionless, speaking only when addressed, refusing all nourishment, not even returning the pressure of Mrs. Kellinger's fingers.

"Bel, do you forgive me?" whispered Mrs. Kellinger, bending over her in the dim light of the next morning.

"I do not know," she muttered, faintly.

"You do not love me now!" she pleaded, brokenly.

"I do not think—I do. I do not love anybody—I cannot think."

The tears were stealing from out the closed lids, her lips were pallid, her fingers were moving nervously; she did not appear yet to be quite alive.

"You will be willing to go to America now—to

your mother's father?" she questioned, anxiously, seeking to arouse her.

"I would rather go to my mother! I want my *own* mother," she moaned, in pitiful appeal.

The impulsive woman at her side burst into a passion of weeping; Isobel did not lift her hand or speak one word to comfort her; she wondered as if in a dream at her own hard-heartedness; she would fondle any creature who was hurt, and now, some one was weeping in loud agony, and she did not seem to care at all.

Another and another day she lay upon the bed, too weak to rise, too careless whether she lived or died, to take any means of restoration; and when remonstrated with she replied that she desired to die, she must go to her mother. "Mamma" had once trembled on her lips, but it was instantly changed to "Madame."

"I deserve it," was Mrs. Kellinger's self-reproach, "but there was something I liked about the sweet way she said 'mamma;' it was helping me to become motherly."

Upon the tenth day Mrs. Kellinger said to her, standing with a glass of milk at her side: "The doctor says you will die if you do not eat."

"Then certainly I will not eat; you know I want

to die; I would rather go to heaven than to America. I have not any one to love me here, and my own mother is in heaven."

"That's pretty talk! I am out of all manner of patience with you. I am paying your board here, and the doctor's bill, and I haven't half money enough for myself. Your father is not doing anything for you. I have done a great deal for you. You are a very ungrateful girl."

Instantly Isobel lifted herself with indignant strength, and snatching the glass from her hand, drained it.

"I will grow strong enough not to be any more expense to you," she said, distinctly and decidedly.

"Anything, if you will only eat," muttered Mrs. Kellinger; "I can't stand it to see you lie there and die; I feel like a murderer. Bel, I want to be good to you, dear."

"Do the girls come every day?" asked Bel, falling back into the pillows, heedless of her tenderness.

"Mr. Dekker came yesterday and said he would come again this morning; he is going away, and he wanted to see you before he went."

"Will you dress me, then? I must see him; I

have something to say to him," she cried, in eager haste.

With one of her touches of penitence, Mrs. Kellinger arrayed the girl in one of her own prettiest wrappers; it was white with white lace about it. The girl smiled as she looked down at it, understanding the love that prompted the pretty attention.

"Madame," she said, lifting her arms to entwine them about the neck bent so near her, "I do love you; I have to love somebody, and I have not any one else. You are very kind to me."

There was something besides the quick kiss left upon Isobel's forehead; there was a quick tear. Who loved *her*? Had she any one else? Would it not be sweet to keep this sweet girl, and have the old name come back to her? The gay life she had planned would not give her hours like this.

Lucy had called her "mamma;" there would never be any one to call her mamma again! She had said she hated it, that it made her too "old;" despite her love of the world there was so little left in it for her; there was nothing when she was frightened, as she often was, when she awoke in the dark.

A coal fire burned in the grate; the sunshine was

always dimmed in "smoky" Shields, and the light that came through the half closed blinds seemed but a faint reflection of sunlight. The room held everything for an invalid's comfort; Isobel was becoming attached to it, there was a homeness about it that she would be glad to keep.

"Do you wish to see Mr. Dekker alone?"

"Yes, Madame," with measured courtesy.

"What for? There hasn't been any——"

"Any what?" asked Isobel, innocently.

"Flirtation," laughed the woman of the world.

"What is that?" asked the school-girl.

"Is that an English word you do not know?"

"I have seen it; I do not know its exact meaning."

"Neither do I. The meaning is in the mind of the one who speaks it. It is not a word for you to think about. What a child you are! How old I was at your age!"

Isobel played with the lace at her wrist; hesitated, stammered, and at last spoke clearly: "I did a shameful thing; I wish to confess to him; I have been thinking about it since I have been so ill; it has made a great and real difference to him. I burned a letter that he had not yet read, from a girl in America whom he wishes to marry——"

Mrs. Kellinger's astonishment expressed itself in prolonged exclamation; at last she asked: "What on earth did you do that for? Were you jealous of the girl?"

"Jealous!" repeated Bel, proudly. "I do not understand you, Madame."

"What did you do it for, then?" with quick distrust.

"To shield myself; to conceal what I had done; I had torn it and read a part of it."

"What possessed you, child?"

"I do not know; it was partly an accident. I do not think any of it was intentional except the burning. It has changed his plans; I must tell him."

"Let his plans go. He is a man, let him take care of himself; if it were an accident I don't see how you are to blame."

"But he should know it," persisted Isobel.

"And despise you for doing it! You are making the case out against yourself. I never tell anything against myself; if you have made a friend of him, why are you willing to lose him?"

"I have not thought of him as my friend."

"Well, he *is*. He is interested in you. He is a friend worth having."

"It is hard to tell him; I thought it was impossible—but I must do right."

"Do right!" scornfully; "what high notions have you got into your head? It is right for a girl to take care of herself; he will be very angry."

"He cannot hurt me," said Bel, half smiling.

"You are not strong enough for the excitement of it. I forbid you to see him; I am your nurse and guardian. You positively shall not see him unless you promise me not to speak of this silly affair."

Bel's weak lips stiffened into very stern lines.

"You are not my mother."

The indescribable tone, the pride, the rebellion, the *hurt* of it, even, brought a flash into the eyes fixed upon the girl.

"I am your guardian, instead of your father, if you wish to put it in that way; he would not consent to your making yourself worse, when you have to sail next week. The Goodspeed is almost loaded. I have made arrangements for you to go to America, under Captain Dermot's care."

"If I am strong enough," moaned Bel. "I do not like to think of that state-room."

"You will never be strong enough with such

worries on your mind. I knew something was the matter with you—beside—”

“It will be on my mind, until I get it off, by telling Mr. Dekker.”

“And faint away again !”

“That is a little thing now. I shall never be troubled over little things again.”

“You hear what I say ? You shall not see him unless you promise.”

“Will you take my word ?” pleaded Isobel.

“I shall stay in the room and enforce my own.”

The blue eyes were as undeniably angry as the black eyes. Bel's lips were not less firm than her guardian's. If it were often to be like this, was she not glad to go away ? And it must often be that the two strong wills would clash. Her standard of right, she had learned in these few days, was infinitely higher. To confess to Mr. Dekker was simply right in her eyes, and her blessed right to do it ; she could not make “restitution” for his lost property ; she could only repeat to him the words she had read ; to “Madame,” as in her thoughts she had begun to think of her mother, it was preposterous foolishness. Would not some other things in her Testament be “silly,” also ?

Mrs. Kellinger stepped to the mantel and began

to arrange the few ornaments upon it; she was trembling with anger; the angry light had faded from Isobel's eyes, but she did not feel that she had conquered.

Who ever conquered Hope Devoe—and was not this girl, in spite of the differences in education, another Hope Devoe? Had she not been deceitful about the letter, and was not that her mother all over again? But had her mother ever wished to confess like this? Had she not? What heart-broken and repentant letters she had written to her father! She was certainly not Hope Devoe when she died; and this girl might be the changed Hope Devoe, with the strong will unchanged. In that case how could they two live under one roof as mother and daughter? Still she loved her all the better for it; this girl was something better than Hope Devoe had ever been.

If this “confessing” were one of the ideas learned at school, how many other troublesome ways she must have! Her decision should not be recalled; she should go in the Goodspeed. The doctor declared there was nothing the matter with her but weakness and stubbornness; the sea air would build her up, and she would have nothing to be stubborn about, when she was away from her.

"Isobel Kellinger, that man shall not enter this room unless you promise."

"Perhaps I can go out of the room," was the defiant retort.

With two bounds Mrs. Kellinger was at the door, the key was turned, and then triumphantly deposited in her pocket.

"Is he going soon?" Bel asked, undisturbed.

"You will see him—or not see him, for the last time, to-day."

"Perhaps he would not go if he knew what was in the letter, mamma! Can't you see that it makes a difference?"

"I do not care whether he goes or stays, he is nothing to me. And it is something to me to have you ready to sail next week. My own plans will be spoiled, otherwise."

Weak, rebellious, baffled tears rolled slowly down Isobel's thin cheeks; she was forced to yield, but she had not wavered, or submitted. In her heart she had confessed to him; God would forgive her now.

"Madame, my Testament is in the pocket of my gray dress; will you give it to me, please?" in a broken voice.

"Your Testament! I should think you *would*

want to read it. You are a very bad girl, and I would advise you to say all the prayers you know."

"I *am* bad," acknowledged Isobel, penitently, "and that is why I want to see Mr. Dekker; but you are worse than bad, you are *wicked*, to keep me from doing right."

A provoking laugh was the only reply. How often that laugh had driven her husband to desperate words. Her sweet laugh won him as nothing beside had power to do.

With eyes too blurred to read, and hands too weak to hold the little volume, Bel took it and slipped it under her pillow. It would be there to read when she was alone; she wanted to read about "falling," and "faultless." How could she become faultless when she was falling every hour?

"Some time, when you can behave yourself and listen, I want to tell you about your grandfather and my sister Marietta, who will have the care of you."

"Does she know about my mother?" asked Isobel, eagerly.

"Yes, and that she was a high-tempered, deceitful thing, like you, with all her gentle eyes, and pretty face."

"O, Madame!" Isobel lifted herself on an elbow, "I have not told you; I took her picture out of papa's desk; it was so beautiful I wanted it. And I did not know she was my mother. Papa will be glad to let me have it, will he not?"

"He has no use for it," said Mrs. Kellinger coolly, "he has always cared a great deal more for me. The picture is yours as much as anybody's. So that is the way you steal things, is it?"

"I stole my own, that time," laughed Isobel, in her gladness.

Mrs. Kellinger smiled; she was as much of a girl as the girl before her; it was hard to array herself against this girl whose "Madame" was pleasanter to her than the "wife" spoken by her husband.

"Is that all you have of mamma's?"

How sweet the word was! Her real, own precious mamma; the mamma like her; *was* she deceitful and high-tempered like herself?"

"I never had anything of hers," was the short answer.

"You had me, and I am hers," said Isobel, proudly.

After a moment Isobel spoke from among her pillows: "I have Lucy's book, and her pretty

white dress, and a pair of slippers; may I take them with me to America and keep them?"

The lines of her lips relaxed, the eyes filled. Mrs. Kellinger dropped into the nearest chair and covered her face with both hands; she was utterly won.

"You break my heart; you resist my will, and you make me glad to send you away; and you talk about Lucy, and you say you love me, and you make me want to keep you. Oh, I wish I wasn't two women!"

Isobel's weakness was forgotten; before the cry was fully uttered, she had given a leap and thrown herself into Mrs. Kellinger's arms.

"I do love you; you have always been good to me, when I had nobody else; I will be like Lucy to you if you will let me stay; and I will say 'mamma, dear mamma,' as she used to when she said her prayers every night."

The two sobbed together and clung to each other. After all, whom had they beside each other!

And she had been the idolizing love of Isobel's childhood and girlhood.

"But your grandfather has a right to you; the next right after your father, and I promised him I would send you; I have promised your father and grandfather too."

“But you can let the ship go, and keep me awhile; you know how ill I have been,” pleaded Isobel with a caress. There was a tap at the door; Mrs. Kellinger opened it, and the maid announced “Mr. Dekker, to see Miss Kellinger.”

“Say Mrs. Kellinger will be down in five minutes.”

XII.

HER PROMISE.

THE two stood looking at each other ; in Isobel's attitude there was appeal, in Mrs. Kellinger's resolution.

“O, mamma, if you let me tell him, I will promise, solemnly promise to eat everything you bring, and to go to sleep every night.”

The resolution was evidently weakened.

“O mamma, dear mamma, *please*.”

Mrs. Kellinger scrutinized her from head to foot.

“Brush your hair, smooth out your dress, bathe your eyes—there's cologne on my table—sit down and be quiet, and I'll send him up.”

Isobel obeyed in every particular ; he would think her changed ; her hands were so thin, and how big her eyes were ; perhaps he would not be so angry now that she was ill.

Very gravely and shyly she received him, rising

to meet him at the door ; he led her to a chair and seated himself beside her.

"Your mother said you were changed ! How ill you have been. I thought you were a very Hebe."

"I am not ill now. I have begun to grow strong."

"Since when ?" he said, smiling, then suddenly grew grave, with the thought that he might find his bright little Annie even more changed.

"Are the girls still having a good time ?"

"Janet and Ellinor ? O yes. I see them every day. Ellinor's journal still flourishes, and Janet reads her specified number of pages and goes everywhere."

Now was the time ! How should she say it ? In the night, as she lay awake, it had seemed so easy ; her words came without an effort—and now—she felt as if she were choking ; her throat was as dry as if filled with dust.

"I am still in my quandary. I seem to make plans, but to change them. Mrs. Pierrepont writes me, that she will sail for Italy the first of September, that Annie may have the benefit of the winter there."

"Is she any better ?" Bel asked tremulously.

"Did I tell you she was ill ? I had forgotten.

I may find her a pale weak little thing, like you. You think girls have a hard time, don't you?"

"I *know* they do," was the quick, emphatic reply.

"Annie never has before."

"She has not had time," said Bel. "She is young."

"You are stricken in years. I forgot. She is younger than you are. But I am wearying you. I may come again."

He arose. She attempted to rise, but fell back.

"Oh, do not go—yet. I wish to talk—"

"Not to-day. You are not even strong enough to listen."

She tried to speak; she formed the words, but they made no sound—the inarticulate cry did not recall him. She had not been brave; it had been too hard; she could never, never confess. His eyes, his voice himself made it impossible. How could she bear his anger? She had borne so much; she was so weak; was she so very wicked not to tell him?

"Well, is it all over?" cried her mother's gay voice.

"It will never be over," she burst out. "I am a coward. I could not say it."

"So much the better. There was no need, but

in your foolish imagination. Lie down again. And now you must eat a good dinner."

The good dinner was tasted, and a part of it forced down; then, exhausted, she slept until dusk. The first thing her opened eyes espied, was her mother, sitting before the glowing grate. She did not speak: it was almost happiness to awake and find her sitting there.

She was very beautiful in the firelight, in her navy blue dress; her pretty hands and hair and eyes were each noted and lovingly admired by the watcher upon the bed.

In contrast with this cosy room, the long cabin appeared cheerless; the state room with its narrow berth, its one round window, its stationary washstand—and it contained nothing else—desolation itself.

They were all kind, but they had each other. All she desired now, was this warm room and her mother. She was her "nurse" and her "guardian;" but she was more than either, she was all the mother she had ever loved.

"Oh, you are awake! And looking at me with your great big eyes. I must send a better looking face to Marietta."

"Marietta! Your sister."

“My only sister. She is not like me, she is one of your good women. She loves birds and kittens and children. She will love you in a minute; so will your grandfather. He worshipped your poor mother. Perhaps I ought to tell you; you will hear of it in some way—but I don’t know how to break anything. I do it like shooting it out of a gun. Your mother was only a little simple country girl, like you, but younger, when she met your father at my mother’s house. He admired her. She was a silly little thing, who never hurt anybody’s feelings—and he took her home at the end of her two weeks’ visit. Her father hated him; from the first he saw through him, I suppose, and forbade Hope to write to him, as he had asked her to do. Afterward they met at my mother’s, and I helped her marry him against her father’s will.”

“Oh, how could you!” cried Bel, starting up in distress.

“I was young and romantic, and put ideas into her head. I may as well confess it to you; she would never have done it but for me, and I told her so afterward, silly little thing.”

“What did her father do?” Isobel’s white lips questioned.

“What could he do, but let them alone. He has

never been the same man since; he had a stroke after that. You will take her place to the old man, he is very old now. Marietta seemed to think she had some atonement to make for me, and she went to him and has been his main stay for years. She has no money; my money came through a brother of my mother's who took a fancy to me, and gave me all the education I ever had. Then, the good old fellow died and left me all the money he was worth. I was named after his wife; I suppose that had something to do with it." After a pause, Mrs. Kellinger resumed meditatively, "Marietta is a dear old thing, but she has never forgiven me for marrying Hope Devoe to your father and then marrying him myself."

"And my mother named me after you?" asked Isobel, after thinking awhile about 'the dear old thing,' and loving her because she was on her side. If she had been there she would have kept Hope Devoe from doing such a thing!

"Your name is Isobel Hope."

"I wish you had called me Hope."

"Your grandfather will call you Hope, I've no doubt."

"If I should stay with you," Isobel's voice was

low and earnest, "would you be like that to me; would you influence me to do like that?"

Mrs. Kellinger gave a shivering laugh. "Don't sit there and look at me so! Of course I wouldn't. I was a silly girl then myself, going to the theatre and reading novels, and caring for nothing but gay company."

"Do you do those things now?" asked Isobel, with her solemn eyes fixed upon her.

"I am older now," she evaded.

Isobel arose and came to her. "Did my mother forgive you?"

"I don't know; I never asked her. These are all my later reflections, spoken to her daughter. Somehow this fire; and you lying there asleep, made me blue; I have fits of low spirits very often; your poor father hated them."

And when he hated her low spirits, she felt that he hated her; if he had only loved her into being good! Could she begin her life again—go back to this girl's twenty years—she was sure she would choose to be "good."

"When shall I see papa?"

"Oh, I don't know. He has gone on a long voyage. He will steer clear of New York, his old owners live there, and he isn't anxious to see them."

“Why?”

“Because he cheated them,” said his wife, in her hardest voice, “he cheated them and disgraced his wife and daughter.”

Isobel dropped on her knees and hid her face in her mother's lap. “What dreadful things you are telling me! Is there not any good, happy thing to tell me?”

“You are good,” said her mother, more moved than she had been for years, “and you will be happy. They will love you dearly, and you will have a pleasant home. Isn't that all you want?”

“Mamma, you are not good; you were not good to my mother, but I do love you, and I want *you* beside.”

There was much that was demonstrative and affectionate in Mrs. Kellinger's nature. For years she had been chilled and thrown back upon herself; as a girl she had been full of caressing ways; she kissed the head in her lap and spoke not a word.

She would keep that girl, if she had to work her finger nails off to do it; perhaps, she could go back, and begin over again with her! Oh, to have twenty years forgotten and forgiven, and to go back and be twenty again!

“Grandpapa needs me; I must go to him to com-

fort him for poor mamma; she would bid me go, would she not?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Kellinger, jealously, "I suppose she would."

"And papa wants me to go. I am glad I have so much to go for. How long must we be on the ship, do you think?"

"That depends. Sometimes it is a long passage. You may count on fifty days more or less, I suppose."

Isobel sighed and lifted her head.

"I am stronger to-night. I have a great deal to live for. I am glad you told me all. Where shall I write to papa?"

"I must give you the address. He left good-bye for you and said he wanted to see you."

"Poor papa," sighed Isobel.

And with her softened heart his wife sighed: "Poor old John."

Neither sighed "*Dear.*"

Had he been with his wife and daughter to-night, would his heart have been softened, also?

On the first day out, he had said to the mate: "Some clear night, at eight bells, I am going home."

To-night, as the fire glowed in the grate in that

pleasant upper room in Shields, and his wife and daughter were being drawn nearer to each other, John Kellinger, their husband and father, the man who had cheated his owners, the man who had lost his position among men, walked deliberately to the bow of the ship, and threw himself over into the ocean. Is this too sad a story? Is it too sad to be true?

Isobel never learned how her father was "lost overboard;" it was the one "dreadful thing" that her mother kept from her.

With the light of the fire on their faces they sat talking a long while; in the intervals of silence, Mrs. Kellinger was seeking to find a way to send Isobel home to comfort her grandfather, and yet to keep her with herself.

"Mamma!" with a joyful thrill in her voice: "I have thought what to do. May I do it? I shall never be brave enough to speak, but I can write a note and tell him. May I?"

"If you will be happier, you strange girl, and I really believe you will."

"I wish I could send it to-night—"

"You can. I will find a way. It will be safe to send it to the ship. I've forgotten his address."

“I wish you would write it—only he might not wish you to know what the letter said.”

“It is better for you to write it. Do it quickly, and have it off your mind, once for all, and never get into such a tangle again.”

It was written, with very few explanatory clauses; it was partly accident and partly her own fault; and then she quoted the words she had read; the startling, solemn words that made her own heart ache. Was he brave to bear it? Would she ever know how he was hurt?

The letter was sent that evening. Janet and Ellinor called the next day. Ellinor, the chatterbox, (and for once Bel rejoiced that she was a chatterbox,) told Bel that Mr. Dekker had been “awful mad or something” over the letter she sent, and had spoken “awful sharp” about something she said about it, and when she asked if he were going to say good-bye to Miss Kellinger, he said, “No,” and then he said: “Thank her for the letter.” He had started for London, and did not tell them where he was going next.

“Bel,” said her mother that night, “I have something good to tell you. I hope I shall live to tell you a great many good things. This is better than

anything you will guess, and you must grow strong to enjoy it."

"You will tell me before I go; before next Wednesday?" eagerly and anxiously.

"I will tell you Wednesday, after we go on board the Goodspeed."

That night at midnight Isobel was lying wide awake, with her eyes staring about the room in the dusky light of the smouldering fire in the grate. She had been thinking hard, ever since she had lain down three hours before. Thinking hard about what would become of her, and what she should do when her voyage was ended, and she was in the home her mother had—no, she could not put it to herself—"run away from," but the thought was there, and the ugly words were crowded down.

Her mother had gone away and left her to be the daughter of her father's old age; she would not be the granddaughter, she would be the daughter. She would lose her own life in her mother's girlhood; it should be to her grandfather as if his daughter had never forsaken him. Another Hope Devoe would go back to him. She would begin doing her work for him in the hour her mother left off; he should forget and be comforted.

What a lovely thing that would be, for his sake, and her poor young mother's! For her own? But she would be brave, and not think about herself at all. She felt very brave as she lay there in the half-lighted room, with the leagues of the sea between herself and the life she was picturing. She might not love her grandfather, but she would love him better than her mother had loved him; she would love him to the end; no one should coax her away. She would not dream any more about that dear little home in which she would belong to somebody, for she would never belong to any one excepting her mother's old father. And after that—why, she would be old and not care—if she had to stay with him until she were as old as thirty, she would not dream any dreams then, she would stay on in the farm-house and something would become of her. It *was* rather doleful; the only bright thing about it was that she would be doing what her mother should have done; it would be her mother's "restitution;" her mother's life would be restored in her life. And if she had no life of her own, it would not really matter; she would be doing a brave, beautiful thing, and that would keep her up.

She had never heard of such a thing or read of

it; perhaps no one had ever done it before. The thought of it was pretty enough for even Longfellow to write it in a poem. The bravery and the beauty were all the comfort she craved. Now that her promise to herself was made and registered in the depths of her steadfast heart, she could turn away from the light and shut her eyes and try to sleep. Every hour she must grow strong for that dreaded voyage. She belonged to her grandfather now. She fell asleep belonging to him. New grace and dignity were added to the girlishness of her life.

In the early dawn she awoke under the pressure that something had happened to her. In an instant the "vow" made in the silent midnight flashed upon her; the room was dark, the rain was beating heavily against the blinds; it must be rough out upon the ocean; and Janet was still and reserved, and Ellinor, such a chatterbox, and Mr. Dekker would not be there, and he was angry with her, anyway, and her grandfather might not be so glad to see her.

"Bel, what *are* you crying about? You will never be fit to go. I shall have to tell you to cheer you up. What do you want most?"

"To stay here with you," sobbed Bel, her bravery

having all oozed away. "I am afraid of every thing."

"You silly thing," laughed Mrs. Kellinger; then she drew the girl's head into her arms and whispered, pushing her hair aside: "*I am going to America with you.*"

XIII.

THE BOOK.

Not one word came to Isobel in reply to her note to Prosper Dekker, unless the tiny book left with Janet Dermot, with her name and his written upon its cover, and "In memory of our days on board the Goodspeed," upon the fly leaf, might be counted a word in return.

How many times she read that book through upon the homeward voyage, she had no idea; her mother teased her about it, at first, and then, after glancing through it herself one lonesome, stormy Sunday, a shade of thoughtfulness stole over her face every time she saw the girl absorbed in it.

It became as precious to Isobel as her mother's picture. That you may appreciate how much it was to her, I will copy the pages she read the oftenest:

"What is the meaning of the Supper?"

"It was Thursday evening. The Lord Jesus and his disciples were sitting at a table in an upper

room in the city of Jerusalem. They were keeping the feast of the Passover. This feast was observed once a year by all the people, and was meant to keep them in mind how the Lord had delivered their fathers out of Egyptian bondage; especially, how the destroying angel, who smote the first-born in every Egyptian household, passed over the houses of the Israelites.

“If you will read carefully the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus, you will learn more about this Passover than I can tell you now.

“Upon the eventful Thursday evening, when Jesus and his disciples were keeping the feast, ‘Jesus took bread: and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner, also, he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come.’ (1 Cor. xi. 24-26.)

“After this they sang a hymn (Matt. xxvi. 30,) and went out into the Mount of Olives.

“That same night Judas led a great multitude with swords and staves (Mark xiv. 43) in the Gar-

den of Gethsemane and betrayed Jesus to his enemies, who led him to the judgment hall.

“Early in the morning the Council bound Jesus and delivered him to Pilate.

“Pilate delivered him to the Jews, who were eager to crucify him. Very soon the cross was laid upon his shoulder; ‘and when they came to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him,’ (Luke xxiii. 33.) From that night, as Jesus intended, the Lord’s Supper has taken the place of the Passover. And it will be observed until the Lord comes again.

“The Passover, you have heard, reminded the Israelites of the night when the Lord smote the first-born among the Egyptians. The Israelites had blood sprinkled on their door-posts; and whenever the destroying angel saw that blood stain he passed by without destroying.” (Ex. xii. 23.)

Isobel searched for Exodus, (Ellinor told her that was the meaning of ‘Ex.’) in her Testament, and when she had searched in vain, she asked Ellinor where to find it. The little girl tried hard not to laugh, and choked behind her handkerchief instead, and then as seriously as she could, brought her own Bible and found Exodus in the Old Testament.

"The difference is not because yours is French," she explained patronizingly, "but you have only a part of the Bible, the *new* part; all about the Israelites and the kings and Chronicles is in the *old* part. You may have mine every day."

"No one told me that," replied Isobel, with humility, "I think mamma will buy me one like yours."

"I have one somewhere," said Mrs. Kellinger, drowsily stirring from her nap on the cabin sofa, "but it is fine print. They gave it to me in Sunday-school, when I was a little bit of a good-for-nothing child."

This conversation occurred the first time Isobel read the tiny book; afterward, she read it with Ellinor's Bible in her lap; she found the references at every reading.

"The Lord's Supper reminds us of the death of Christ. His blood sprinkled on our hearts makes us as safe as the Israelites were in their dwellings. The paschal lamb was a type or figure of Christ, who is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.

"The Lord's Supper is called a feast because it refreshes and strengthens the souls of those who rightly partake of it. It is called a seal of the

covenant, because, like a sealed charter or grant put into our hands, it confirms or makes sure to us a right and title to all the benefits of Christ's purchase.

“Perhaps you have seen a charter with wax, and the impression of a seal upon the wax. This mark of the seal proves its genuineness.

“The king of England has his private seal, and also his great seal, or seal of the kingdom.

“Some one has beautifully said of the Supper: ‘It is a seal of Christ's own devising and engraving, whose inscription is Christ loving us; and whose image is Christ dying for us.’

“The Lord's Supper is also called a Sacrament; and this word means *oath*.

“The word was used among the Roman soldiers for a military oath, whereby they bound themselves to be true and faithful soldiers to their general. So in this Supper we bind ourselves to the Captain of our Salvation, Jesus, promising to be true and faithful soldiers in the army of the Lord.

“We see then that the bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ; that the bread is broken and the wine poured out to remind us how his body was broken and his blood shed for our sins; and that, as we eat the bread and drink the wine,

so our crucified Saviour is the meat and drink of our soul's life.

“So eating and drinking in remembrance of him, we ‘show his death,’ and our souls are fed with heavenly food.

“The Supper is also a sign that we are members of Christ's family, loving him chiefly, and loving each other; and that we are his followers, his soldiers, to whom he gives the sealed pledge of the heavenly kingdom.”

One afternoon Isobel and her mother were sitting upon the transom together; the girl with her head upon her mother's shoulder.

“Mamma, you must pet me,” she said; “I am not perfectly strong yet.”

“You bring all the petting out of me there is in me; I never knew I had any before.”

“O, mamma! Lucy,” reproved Isobel.

“I was with her so little,” sobbed the mother, penitently.

“But she loved you; we used to build castles of how we would go sailing with you.”

“And now you are going sailing with me.”

“I did not expect it—like this.”

“Did you expect better than this?” she asked, jealously.

“ I expected papa would be with us ; do you think it is wrong to be glad—not to be sorry that he is not with us ? ”

Janet and Ellinor were with their father, in the house on deck ; Ellinor had dropped her slate and Janet her sewing, at his call.

“ Then I am very wrong,” was the energetic reply, “ and I do not try to be right. He is not like Captain Dermot ; these girls never dread to hear his steps coming down from the deck, and I used to dread it like a frightened child.”

“ Poor mamma ! ” said Bel, caressing her cheek.

“ And when I was frightened I used to be ugly, and say ugly things ; when I didn’t dare I dared the more ; Bel, no one has ever brought the good out of me as you have. I think I *might* have been a good wife ; I do want to be a good mother.”

The girl’s only reply was a silent caress.

“ I think of papa because Captain Dermot reminds me of him ; and I wonder if papa would have liked to have us both on board his ship.”

“ He will never have a ship again,” said his wife, bitterly.

“ Why ? ” asked Bel, astonished.

“ He has lost his ambition ; he has lost his good name—all he ever had to lose.”

“Will he never come to America?”

“I hope not.”

“Then must we go to to him?”

“I must; you need not. Your grandfather will take care of you. Perhaps I shall behave better—I have written to him; one night, when you were asleep I looked at you and my hard heart began to feel softer, and I wrote him a letter and told him that *you* were somebody to live for, if his wife were not.”

“O mamma!” was the loving expostulation.

“I want to try again; I want to *begin* again; as if I were you, and had another chance.”

“Begin with me,” said Bel, joyously. “I do not believe the Lord Jesus (the name was new on Bel’s lips and came with reverent hesitation) thinks you are so much older than I am, if you feel so.”

“I only feel so; I do not *do* so; I am a loose bundle of impulses and moods and temper; I was cross to you this morning, I shall be cross again before night,” in a tone so sincerely remorseful that Bel gave her a quick kiss.

“It does not hurt long,” she said, smiling; “you are so sweet afterward that I forget.”

The forty-seven days upon the ocean were

golden days to Isobel ; she had so much to think about and talk about, and she had, what she had so rarely had before—her mother all to herself.

It was a shock, and a great sorrow still, that her beautiful mother was not her own mother ; but as the days went on she said to herself that she loved her the more, not the less ; for it was so *good* in her to love and provide for her, when she was not her own child, like Lucy. For the first time, she began to be jealous lest Lucy should keep the first place in her mother's heart.

“ Perhaps Lucy has my own mother up in heaven,” she thought, “ who knows ?”

Janet and Ellinor amused her every hour ; Janet's replies were as odd as Ellinor's questions.

And then there was the looking forward ! the strangeness of America was taken away, now that her mother might be with her ; she was glad her grandfather was as pretty and quaint as a picture of the last century ; and she would see Mr. Perez Dekker again ! Mr. Perez Dekker ! She smiled at her mental photograph ; hair long and black, behind his ears ; the blackest eyes that seemed to look through you and wonder, as if he were weighing your words in some invisible balance ; with a courteous presence, old-fashioned, or knightly, or

book-wormish ; (that was one of Janet's words ; she learned new English words every day). She had decided that he did not approve of her ; she would rather that he did ; he was the only gentleman that had ever visited her, and he had come but three times. Madame had remained in the room and silenced her several times by a look or a tap of her foot when she was pouring out her complaints and her dread of going to America. She was ashamed of herself, in this thoughtful retrospect ; what *had* moved her to burst out and give so much of herself !

He might not care to renew an acquaintance so unpleasantly begun ; he might never speak to her again.

And then there was the new aunt ; not as old as Madame, not disagreeable and stiff like Mademoiselle ; the aunt who had all her life been kind to children and old people, and who had never had any life of her own. Something had happened to make her sorrowful once, her mother had told her, but no one knew all about it, and never would ; all she cared for now was *work* ; Bel supposed, in her musing, she never opened a book or looked at a picture, or thought about the sunset or the singing of the birds. Her life must be all ended.

These three people, with mamma, would be all her America. She might have to be shut up in a dark room with grandpapa day and night; she would never forget her promise, she had written it in the blank page at the back of her New Testament.

So at last, with all these things in her mind, and in her heart, the forty-seventh day came, and Isobel's feet touched American soil.

XIV.

GRANDPAPA.

As he sat alone one midnight, after his sister had gone up-stairs, Perez Dekker twisted his cousin's letter in his fingers, and mused over its contents. There was but a single allusion to his broken engagement, (how jubilantly he had written about Annie the day before he sailed,) a hint about his plan of winter travel, a promise of meeting in the spring.

"After all his hard study and hard work, this is what he has come to," he mused, "a wanderer upon the face of the earth, seeking to regain his wasted strength. Somehow, I can't see that he amounts to much;" adding fondly, "but he is a splendid fellow."

In his own estimation Perez Dekker amounted to a large sum. He modestly kept that valuation to himself.

As he sat thinking, he untwisted the sheet and read again the closing paragraph:

"I never expected to live an *easy* life; my present laziness is enforced. I spoke for half an hour here last week and with the best physical result to myself. I shall try my old life, or something else in the way of work, before long. God does not lay his cross upon us, we are bidden to *take it*. There is nothing passive about it; it is all active; endurance is an active state. If we follow Christ, we must take up his cross. It is in the way along which he goes. Woe is me if I do any other thing or go any other way. 'In our measure why may not the cross become our delight, as it was his?'"

With the letter had been sent a copy of an illustrated magazine, published in London. Prosper wrote that he had met the editor, a lady, at the house of a friend, and after hearing him speak, she had importuned him to "write something" for her magazine. He had tried to put her off by saying that his pencil did nothing beside jottings in a book he carried in his breast pocket, and she had begged for a leaf from it.

"Not that it will be anything to you, old friend, beside a photograph of my inner self: but I would like Miss Kellinger to see it: several of the thoughts were suggested by questions she asked, or remarks she made upon that short voyage we

had together. Send me your impression of her; she is waking up and growing. I do not like to think of her in shady places. I believe she is meant to grow in the sunshine."

Perez smiled over his thoughts, and tossed the untwisted sheet into the fire; then he drew a small table before him and answered his cousin's letter.

"You two are not one bit alike," his sister had observed that evening.

"One bit alike would spoil us for each other," Perez replied. "I cannot even drink my coffee as he drinks his."

In his letter was one sentence about Bel:

"Your travelling companion is making a small sensation in our community. To the simple folk there is around her the halo of her foreign surroundings. A foreign tongue is mingled in the prettiness of her English speech; the sunniness of France is about her, the odor of vineyards, the saltiness and sparkle of the sea."

The next morning, as he stood drawing on his gloves, waiting for the carriage, he said to his sister:

"Send this little English affair over the way this morning. The old man and Miss Isobel will both

be interested in it. He snaps at every new bit of reading matter."

"I havn't had time to look over it myself yet," said Miss Jue tartly, "it came only last night."

"You will not care for it; the editor is a woman, and you have no patience with woman's work in that line."

"I saw Prosper's name in it, and I did use to like his sermons. His only fault was in stopping when he was half way through, and in not giving people credit for the good they *do do*!"

"He isn't even half way through in this; but this is marked number one; perhaps he gets through in the next number."

"Do you wish Miss Bel to keep it?"

"Yes," he said, teasingly. "I had not thought of it, but you will suggest such things."

Miss Jue raised her eyebrows and looked at him sharply; she had told him that she "hated that girl."

In the afternoon she took the paper over herself. Bel smiled at the figure crossing the road; the face was hidden in the calico sun-bonnet that in summer she moved in the garden in, a red and green striped shawl was wrapped about her thin shoulders; in one hand she carried the magazine, in the

other a jar of pickled cherries for her old neighbor.

She found the "foreign girl," as she persisted in calling Bel, sitting in the sunshine beside her grandfather; she had been reading aloud to him, but now she had taken some pretty work into her fingers and was chatting with her laughing face turned towards him. The dark room had been a myth; his chair was always in the sunshine. In the three months they had been together they had become the best of friends.

The old man was completely fascinated; he had confided to Marietta, with a falling inflection, that "Bel Hope" was brighter than her mother ever was, and twice as sweet; if there *was* such a thing as compensation he had it in full, and the only sorrow he had in his life was that he would have to die and leave her.

"What does her mother think of such devotion?" Miss Jue asked Miss Devoe that afternoon.

Bel called Miss Devoe "Aunt Marie."

"Oh, she cries sometimes and storms and raves, and threatens to take her away or to go away herself, but the old man only laughs, and tells her to go. Poor little Bel Hope is heart-broken between her two fires, for *he* grows more jealous of her every

day; he says even her father has not the right to her he has. I had no idea Isobel cared so for the child. I do believe it is something new, and half put on."

"Too much indulgence spoils the finest nature, I've heard; I never had any, so I can't speak from experience; it's a perfect marvel to me how one gets *all*. Suppose some young man appears on the scene; *that* will make a commotion."

"Don't prophecy such dreadful things," laughed Miss Devoe, comfortably. "Uncle Harold will shake his stick at them; young ladies, too, for that matter."

"Well, I notice that she grows wilful by the day," snapped Miss Jue, taking up her emptied can; "and I know *one* thing," she snapped to herself, as she paddled over the slushy road, "she shall not be encouraged to come to *my* house and make eyes."

She might be "encouraged" to come, for Perez had spoken of her pure accent, and said nothing would suit him better than to read French with her; and she had asked him why he had idled away his time, and not learned French before? Prosper had written about her, and even asked *her* to make it "pleasant" for Miss Kellinger, saying that her

mother appeared "flippant" and "hardly a safe guardian."

What had she to do with girls? Had she not been bothered with Germans and Jews of all sorts, twenty years of her life? What right had this girl to come and grow bright and sweet before her eyes, and have heaped upon her the love and caretaking of everybody in the house?

Those two women were like two hens with one chicken between them, and both were clucking to get her under their wings.

"Aunt Marie" (why couldn't she say "Marietta" like other people?) would not let her touch a potato for fear of soiling her fingers, and her grandfather (old fool) thought her too good to return the calls of the girls in the neighborhood.

And now Perez wanted to exalt her a little higher, by making her a French teacher, and paying her so much an hour! It would be queer if she *couldn't* speak French!

In the mean while, Isobel, who would have asked Miss Jue to explain what making "eyes" meant, was turning the leaves of the new magazine, delighted to find in it a reminder of her school days, for one of the English girls had

lent an odd number to her at school, and in it she had learned about St. John the Beloved.

After a while she uttered a little cry of joy and welcome; she had espied a name at the bottom of a page. Glancing down the page there seemed something familiar in the words. She had an undefined feeling of recognizing a face or a voice. The name explained it all. It was like that evening in church. From over the sea he had reached out his hand to her.

Mr. Perez Dekker had sent it to grandpapa, but no matter, all the same, it was her own.

"Bel Hope, what is it makes you so glad?" looking up into her radiant eyes.

"Something I find here for me. I heard something like it once in a church."

"Isn't it for me, too?" he asked, good-humoredly.

"Everything I have is for you," she answered, gravely and gratefully.

"Sam has brought me an English paper from the mail," said Mrs. Kellinger, "and I shall take mine up-stairs. Bel, I want you as soon as you are through reading to your grandfather."

"Oui, madame," assented Bel, mischievously.

Bel was arrayed in her blue dress that her grandfather had said was like her mother's, "only pret-

tier," and her hair was in one long braid and curled at the end, as he said her mother used to wear hers ; Bel's hair fell long below her waist, and the curling ends were often in grandfather's fingers; he told her that her hair was growing darker, and would be spoiled by matching her eyebrows some day.

"Will you not like it then?" she asked anxiously.

"Bless you, Bel Hope, I'll like it if it turns green," he said, giving the long braid a twitch.

She read the earnest words in a happy voice. She thought she would not care to read it to any one beside her grandfather.

He muttered "h'm" and "ah" all the way through with an appreciativeness that gratified her, for it was a tribute of praise to the friend she admired.

Bel could not have told you why she liked it; she felt that she did not understand it as Mr. Dekker understood and felt it. It reminded her of him, and that was sufficient to make her glad; she had missed him so long.

There was no beginning; it seemed to begin in the middle. The beginning to her was that night in church, she remembered about the basket of fragments.

"I wish I knew about that soldier who was chained to Paul. I would like to know what Paul said to him, and what the man thought about it, and *did* about it. Perhaps it was as good for him to be chained to Paul as it was for that thief to be crucified at the side of Christ. Is there any person or anything chained to us by the will of man—let us keep it as the will of God—until God does the unchaining. And let us do our best, as we are sure Paul did."

Aunt Marie was listening with her work in her hand; she kept her eyes upon her work with a new expression in them. Aunt Marie, like every one of us, had her own story.

"I know a busy woman who keeps a variety of small work at hand; it is amusing to watch how she has something to pick up on every occasion. I spoke of it one day.

"Don't you know what Luther said?" was her quick reply: 'The idle hand will soon be an empty hand.' If the Lord should say to me a dozen times a day, 'What are you doing?' I should not want to answer him 'Nothing.'"

Aunt Marie nodded an approval, that the reader did not notice.

"Another somebody I know, declares that he

does not believe in the *present* help in trouble; one may be helped to bear it, and that is all the present help there is in it. The *good* of it will be revealed in God's good time (when Satan has had his way a while longer).

"I do not agree with him; there is a blessing to-day for the hurt of to-day, and the man who has it is the man who believes in it and tries to get it. We may keep hold of the hurt, if we rebelliously or submissively will, and have our own bad time instead of God's present good time. We hurt ourselves and lay the blame upon God and try to be 'submissive.' I believe 'God's good time' might come a great deal quicker than anybody knows."

"I don't know how I could have had mine any quicker," responded Grandfather.

"Nobody told me," said Bel. "I would have come, grandpapa."

"You are here now, and that's all I want to know," said the fond old voice.

Grandfather Devoe, for he had begun to be only that to them all, had a sweet pink-and-white face, with long white hair falling about his temples, and on his neck; and a full, glossy white beard and moustache; his sunken eyes were bright and blue, and

now that Bel had come and was ever with him, his voice was as cheery as a bird's.

"She is wrinkled and her cheeks are hollow, and her lips are puckered; I would not kiss her for anything."

Bel read the words, and then looked bewildered; was *that* what she had said herself?

"I saw a perfect sight to-day," was the reply; "a picture of perfect babyhood; it had rings of soft gold hair all over its head, and its eyes were as blue as the sky and as shining as stars; its cheeks were like a pink rose and its lips as sweet as the fragrance of roses. I could not touch it or kiss it, nevertheless; it lived in a forlorn, forsaken house, and was framed in by a rickety, unpainted window frame; I could see none of its beauty; I could think of nothing but the house it lived in. It was very shocking."

Bel laughed aloud. "O, Grandpapa, he said that to me, and now he has written it down for other girls."

"Go on," said Aunt Marie, impatient of the frequent interruptions.

"Suppose you knew that wrinkled, bent, diseased, deformed old body was the Temple of the Holy Ghost, that he dwelt in it, illuminating the

mind and making pure the heart, as really as that child dwells in that falling-down old house, would you still think only of the decay, the ruin?"

Bel paused with serious eyes; he had said that to her, and made her so ashamed of her heartless words.

"If there were no spots or wrinkles in our human bodies, how could we understand why Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it? Was it not that he might present it to himself, a glorious Church, *not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*?"

"Is it a pity that spots and wrinkles must be on the outside of the temples he dwells in?"

"Suppose there were no spots and wrinkles, what would this work of Christ mean to us? All these material things are given that he may make plain to us the spiritual things; through what we see to learn about what our eyes cannot perceive.

"Thus God glorifies even the wrinkles of our fleshly habitation. If there were no 'scarlet,' and no 'snow,' would we not lose the force of one of his strong promises?"

Bel put down the magazine, and looked uncomprehending. Grandfather softly repeated: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

With wistful eyes over the new promise, Bel began to read again; her happy days were moving on with such simple, perfect pleasures, that were it not for the soul hunger that hungered for she hardly knew what, she would have been as content as her old grandfather. She did not feel *forgiven*.

"The incidents in our lives," she read, "are like the pictures in a book; they illustrate what we think and feel, what we *are* in the secret chambers of our heart. As we can judge of the character of a book, of the story it has to tell, by glancing through at its illustrations, so we can judge the hidden thought by the doings we make in our life's story; each doing is in illustration of the book whose title is the name you bear. As the text of the book makes the pictures, so your own true inner self creates the doings of your life. Each day has its own picture."

Again the reader paused to muse. That picture of herself burning his letter, betrayed the thought of her heart. All the naughty, wilful, deceitful doings of her school days illustrated the story of her foolish heart.

Sitting there reading to grandpapa, was a picture of her kept promise.

Her two auditors made no remark.

“I wish mamma were here,” said Bel, “she would care for this.”

“She has her English paper to read,” said Aunt Marie.

“Do you not think it is worth while to make people happy even if you cannot make them good? The goodness of God leads to repentance; that is happiness, or having God’s good things, leads one to turn around, turn away from the good things and the evil things of their lives, and turn towards him. How perfect to be so happy that one feels he must be *good* !”

Bel gave a little laugh. “He means us, grandpapa.”

“God speaks to us in our life, oftentimes, before he speaks to us in his word; what happened to us yesterday illumines his page as we open it to-day.

“Did Christ in his human life have what we are apt to call ‘trouble?’ He had not money to pay his tax-bill; would that be a trouble to us? He had not where to lay his head; would that be a trouble to us?

“Neither did his brethren believe on him; would that be a trouble to us?”

Bel looked up: “Did he have such a hard time, grandpapa?”

"Cannot you read the New Testament?"

"But I think only of his loving words and gracious deeds; I forget that the earth was a hard place for him to live in."

"It is a hard place for us all," said aunt Marie, with unusual sharpness in her tone.

"It is a lovely place for me," said Bel. "All I have to do now is to take happy things."

"Now isn't always," prophesied Miss Devoe, with as much grimness as was possible to her comfortable state of mind.

"It is *between* them," smiled Bel, dropping her eyes on the page again.

"Do you not think Mary was glad that her Son chose a home for her in John's house? What reverent and considerate love she must have received for her Son's sake!"

"Do we give consideration and love to the aged who belong to him, for his sake?"

Bel gave a squeeze to the fingers that were toying with the ends of her hair.

"Prayer is speaking to God; the answer is God speaking to us. We think a great deal, feel, and talk, and pray a great deal about our speaking to God; how about God speaking to us? Do we think, feel, talk, pray, and watch a great deal

about his speaking? Are we not more filled with our part of it, are we ever so filled with ourselves that we cannot listen to him? Do we watch daily at his gates and wait at the posts of his doors to speak to him, or rather to listen while he speaks to us? Do we kneel to listen as often as to speak?

“Are we as wide awake watching for his answer as we are wide awake in offering our supplication?

“Do you ever think, after your prayer is answered: ‘Well, I might have had it, anyway?’ Try it ‘anyway’ and see. You cannot ‘cast your care’ unless you have care to cast. ‘I don’t care’ never cast a care upon God. We give it to God because we *do* care, because we care so much that it is killing us.

“The difference between some people and other people consists in what each *puts first*; some put the kingdom of God first, and others do not put it anywhere.”

Bel spoke quickly: “I do not think Mr. Perez Dekker puts it anywhere.”

“I wonder where *you* put it?” asked Miss Devoe, rather severely.

“I do not know,” faltered Bel.

"Who has taken care of your soul?" with increasing sternness.

"I have not had any," replied Bel, with the utmost seriousness, "one is growing into me now."

At that instant a shriek from up-stairs rang through the still house, and brought each to their feet. Bel flew up-stairs, and was first in her mother's room.

"She must be on fire," exclaimed Miss Devoe, rushing after Bel's swift feet.

XV.

LOST OVERBOARD.

"O, MAMMA, mamma!" cried Bel, bursting in at the open door.

Mrs. Kellinger had thrown herself across the bed, and was weeping with hysteric sobs; pieces of torn newspaper were scattered over the carpet.

"O mamma!" cried frightened Bel again, standing at the bedside in helpless misery.

"It is your father. He has been lost overboard. He is dead in the sea, and I was always hard to him. I did not kiss him, or forgive him, when he went away," sobbed her mother brokenly, staggering to her feet to throw both arms around Bel.

The girl was too frightened to utter a word. Her father had been so little to her. She had not thought of him for days; his name was never spoken, excepting by her mother, and then with her aggrieved, fault-finding air.

"O Bel, he will never come back, and I was not kind to him," wailed the poor wife.

Miss Devoe stood leaning over the low foot-board; grandfather had hurried up-stairs, and balanced himself against the door post, ashen-hued and trembling.

He had hated that man who was lost overboard; he had cursed him in his heart. He turned away and went slowly down-stairs. Had the Lord thought upon his curse?

"Isobel, you must be quiet, you are frightening poor Bel," commanded Miss Devoe's controlled voice.

"Poor Bel, you haven't any father," sobbed her father's wife.

Bel was not sure that she had ever had any father.

"I'll lie down. Cover me up warm, Bel. Marietta, bring me a cup of hot tea; I am freezing to death," Mrs. Kellinger moaned, shivering and frightened.

The shivering ceased in a measure after she was covered up warm, and had drunk the large cup of steaming tea. Miss Devoe went away, after having put wood into the stove and drawn the shades down; Bel sat at the bedside, with her head on her mother's pillow; white, terror-stricken and speechless.

"Lost overboard!" And how she had loved the sea!

"Bel," opening her quivering eyelids, "I must go to New York to see about my mourning. I have been a widow all this time and didn't know it. Do you want to wear mourning?"

"What for?" asked Bel.

"It shows respect for the memory of the dead. A widow needs it as a sort of—protection."

"From what?" questioned inconsequent Bel.

"I will go to-morrow. I need the excitement. Don't go down to supper and leave me. I don't see what I ever did to be punished like this."

"I must go to grandpapa. He will need me all the evening."

"Then Marietta must come up. I cannot stay alone. I wish I could get warm. That dreadful ocean will be before my eyes as long as I live. I feel as if I had pushed him into it."

Before Isobel Kellinger fell asleep, she had wondered if she would ever marry again. Perez Dekker had thought she was only thirty-five. She had not a gray hair in her head, and her figure was as young as Bel's. And she sighed, "poor John," and fell asleep, and dreamed of the sea. She knew that he had lost himself overboard; she

knew that he had no happy home to sail homeward to; she knew that her hand had not held him back from any evil doing. Poor, innocent, happy little Bel, should never know it. She had bidden her pick up those pieces of newspaper and put them into the fire; and unthinkingly and unquestioningly the girl had obeyed.

"Bel Hope, you belong to *me* now," said grandfather: "no one on earth has any other right to you. I wish I could change your name to my name."

"No," said Bel, softening her words with a caress on his cheek, "that is all of poor papa I have."

Bel brought her grandfather's supper into the sitting-room; he said he was "too shaken up," to walk a step, and then he kept her near him talking or reading.

She was a little weary of him to-night; she was often a little weary of him; she longed for the time to herself that she had at Madame's and on shipboard. Now from morning until night, she had not an hour that might not be interrupted by some demand. To-night she wished to go up-stairs and sit by her mother, to talk to her, or to think her own thoughts. It was rather tiresome to belong

altogether to the loving, selfish old man. And now he would claim her more persistently than ever.

"You will not have to call her mother now," he declared, in one of the pauses of the reading.

"Why not, grandpapa?" she asked, startled.

"She was your mother only in virtue of being your father's wife. She is not now your father's wife; she is free from him. Free enough to marry again, (and she'll do it before a year,) therefore she cannot be your mother."

"It will take more than anybody's death to break her right to me," exclaimed Bel, excitedly; "she was kind to me when no one else thought about me. I love her, and I will call her mamma as long as words can come out of my mouth."

"Then you are very ungrateful to me, and I might have known you would be; you've got your father's blood in your veins."

He began with a whine, and ended in a tone of denunciation that caused her to start to her feet and slip away from him.

"There! there!" stretching out his hands towards her, "I didn't mean to frighten you."

"I was not frightened," said Bel, simply.

"Sit down and promise not to call her mother, and I shall be all right again."

"And I should be all wrong; grandpapa, if you ever ask me that again, I will go away and stay all day."

"Where would you go? You have no place to go to," he said, childishly.

"She has. I can go with her."

"Sit down," he growled, "and don't make a fool of yourself."

Bel went to the fire and stood with her foot upon the stove hearth, lifting her dress with her hand; her head was thrown back, her eyes were dancing, and her usually pale cheeks burning hot.

"Bel Hope, you've got a temper," he muttered.

"I hope I have a heart, grandpapa," she said, turning to him with a smile.

"Come here and kiss me, then," he entreated, with a good-humored laugh.

Holding her at arms length he searched her face by the light of the shaded lamp. "Don't resist your best friend, girl."

"No, grandpapa," she said, obediently. "I did not finish the English magazine; would you like to hear the rest?"

"That, as well as anything," he said, contentedly.

Before she was settled again at his side, Mrs. Kellinger entered.

"I had the horrors up-stairs. I awoke, and Marietta was not there."

Bel sprang up and led her to an arm-chair near the fire; seating her and pushing a hassock to her feet; then she knelt at her side and kissed her hand.

"Mamma, you have me always," she said, rubbing her head against her shoulder. Grandfather kept his growl to himself. The bright audacious creature *was* broken-hearted, all the heart she had to break was broken; her unfastened hair fell over her shoulders; lips and cheeks were bright with color; her eyes reminded him of the eyes of a deer he had shot. He did not wonder at the girl's infatuation; it was something to see one woman fascinate another.

"Do not let me disturb you."

"I was reading," Bel said, lifting her head; "you remember Monsieur Dekker, mamma, who was with us in Shields. I am reading something he wrote in that book I told you about."

"Perhaps I would like to hear it."

Still, as Bel read on, she was not sure that she did like to hear it; she did not half understand it.

“If you are determined to believe a lie,” Bel read, “God will let you alone, that you may believe it; only so can you learn that it is a lie.

“If you are determined to live your own life according to your own way, God will let you alone and let you live it—if it cast you into the Red Sea, as it did that hardened king of Egypt, blame yourself for it; to-morrow will follow yesterday in your life, whether you live or die.”

Mrs. Kellinger groaned aloud, and covered her face with both hands. To-morrow had followed her yesterday; would there be another to-morrow still?

“‘I do not see how you can make anything for to-day or for *us* out of the life of Saul;’ one said to me.

“God chose Saul for the kingdom, and then he sent the kingdom from him and took his mercy away from him—all for his disobedience; for one disobedience, was it? Do you wonder why God takes your kingdom away from you? He chose you for it; did you hold it as tributary to him? Were you so faithful that he added to it? Did you cast it away yourself, out of selfishness, out of ambition, out of disobedience?

“Saul was chosen and got his kingdom without

fighting, without even waiting for it. He was not prepared, as David was, to inherit his kingdom. More and more I believe in waiting and preparation."

"I never waited for anything," interrupted Mrs. Kellinger.

"By way of contrast I am reminded of Caleb; he said the Lord kept him alive forty-and-five years that he might receive the promise spoken unto Moses; he kept his strength through all those years to go out and to come in, and then Hebron became his inheritance because he wholly followed the Lord. He was not worn out or discouraged with his years of waiting; he had been too busy following the Lord for that. Not one disobedience is recorded against him. Which one do you think had the best of it?"

"It's too late for me to have any Hebron now," mourned the contrite heart.

"He had a long between times," commented Bel, brightly, "forty-five years."

"But he kept his strength," said the old man, "so it didn't matter."

"Grandpapa, do you know all about Caleb?"

"I don't know all about anybody, child."

"Can I find it in a book?"

"Bless you, child; don't you know Caleb is in the Bible?"

"He is not in my New Testament."

"I wish you would put that French book in the fire and read the Bible in English," he said, fretfully.

"I will read it in English—when I have one, but I will not put my dear little French book in the fire; Mr. Prosper Dekker would not bid me to."

"He's a man of more than one tongue, too. Every book but English is heathenish to me."

Bel laughed and told him he was a queer old grandfather.

"I wish I could see Prosper Dekker," said Mrs. Kellinger.

"He is in Italy," replied Bel. "Mamma, why do you wish to see him?"

"Because," with her audacious laugh, "I'm afraid of being landed in the Red Sea."

"This is the next thing to seeing him," said Bel, "shall I read on?"

"O yes," in a resigned tone.

"Of course," said grandfather, emphatically.

"'Now if I had a friend,' said somebody yesterday. I wonder if the Lord is pleased to hear us say that when he is our friend. It is like the children

of Israel saying: 'Now if we had a king to go out to war before us!' when God was their king. Before I began to worry about the things I couldn't help, I'd set to work to right the things I could help—"

"That's common sense," interrupted grandfather, bringing his hands together.

"Go to the Lord with requests, but not with complaints. Do not in words, or without words, blame him for your lost lives, your wasted lives, your disobedient lives. Do not say if things had been different *you* would have been different; rather, believe that if *you* had been different the people around you would have been different. It is always safe to begin first with oneself. A thought must not necessarily be *new*, to be an inspiration; but we must feel it (which is more than thinking it) in a new fashion. The newness must be in us; God does not change his truth, he changes us; he makes us new creatures."

Isobel Kellinger dropped her head again, with the nearest approach to a prayer she had prayed for years: "I want to be a new creature; I'm sick and tired of the old creature."

Bel read on. She did not catch a word; she scarcely knew when Marietta came in, and the

reading ceased; and yet, contradictory creature that she was, when she lifted her head she was thinking that mourning would be extremely becoming to her; that she regretted taking it off after her mother died; for people had said she would never look so handsome in anything else.

Marietta had said to her that morning: "Isobel Kellinger, the only thing in which you are like a woman is your weakness; you are a child in every other thing."

When she went to the old man to kiss him good-night, as she did every night, he held her hand a moment, and looked up into her beautiful face:

"Isobel, you have no husband now; you need some kind of strength around your life. Stay here as long as you will."

"I must stay with Bel, Uncle Harold."

"So you both seem to think," he muttered.

"And I shall pay my board," she added, proudly.

"No, you needn't. Give the money to the child."

Isobel Kellinger could not sleep that night nor the next; Bel watched the hours through with her, talking to her, and keeping up the fire.

“As soon as I drop asleep,” she moaned, “I hear the sound of the sea. I heard something in a church once about the sea giving up its dead. What was that for, do you suppose?”

“I do not know,” was the sorrowful reply. “I never heard of it.”

XVI.

THE FRENCH LESSON.

ABOUT nine o'clock that January morning, the sun shone out; the green branches of the evergreens, and the bare branches of maple, cherry, apple, pear, elm and locust, were burdened with a weight of ice; every twig was sheathed in ice, and every blade of grass was iced to many times its own thickness. As soon as the sun burst out, the icicles came clattering down; the earth was in a blaze of dazzling silver light.

A figure wrapped around in a crimson shawl, ran down the steps and across the lawn to a pear tree, and standing under it, shook the low branches and laughed aloud under the pelting shower of rattling ice.

Grandfather stood at the window rapping on the pane and laughing.

"Red Riding Hood, don't let any wolf eat you up," he had cautioned, as the crimson figure danced around his arm-chair.

“The wolf” might be Miss Jue Dekker or her brother, for it was Saturday morning, and the French-American girl, as Miss Jue disdainfully called her, was engaged on Saturday morning, between the hours of ten and eleven, to read French with Professor Dekker.

The hour oftener stretched its minutes to two hours, for much conversation in English pushed itself in between the rapid French phrases.

Grandfather’s eyes watched the red figure as it sped across the road and ran along the piazza; then with a sigh, or rather a groan, he thumped his cane back to his chair and dropped into it, feeling injured and deserted because he must miss the light of his old eyes all the morning. It would be all the morning, he muttered, and he could not see why Bel Hope had been so “stubborn” about earning a little money for herself. What was the matter with the young things of this generation; what did they want to be independent for?

The next thing a woman would not marry a man unless she might be independent and earn her own bread and butter. They would be sending for her, before long, to come to that boarding-school in town and teach her jabbering gibberish; he would forbid her to speak a word of her

heathen tongue; and if her French Testament were not, in some queer manner, the word of God, he would throw it into the fire. He had heard that French books had bad morals, and had forbidden her to read any beside that small Testament. And now she was over there reading French books with that dangerous young professor. Groaning again, he thumped his cane upon the carpet until Marietta hurried in from her Saturday morning baking to see if anything new ailed him.

"I want Bel," he shouted angrily; "what did you favor her going over to that house for?"

"Because I wasn't willing to see her die before my eyes for want of fresh air;" was the indignant retort. "Isobel will come and talk to you while she sews."

"On that black stuff! I hate to see it around. It's all a hollow mockery. Keep her away from me. I'll sit here and watch till the child comes."

Marietta departed with the rolling pin in her hand, mentally thankful that the child had some one to fight for her rights, and openly declaring to Isobel that the old man was the only wolf poor little Red Riding Hood had to be afraid of.

"She's mine," said Bel's mother, fiercely.

“I guess she’s her own,” remarked Miss Devoe.

The glorious silver light was shining in at the windows over the way; Miss Jue sat near her work basket, mending a pair of gloves for her brother, and listening to the conversation by the hearth with most intent ears and eyes. It was a pity that Perez’s French needed rubbing up at this late day; why could not the girl go into a store or learn a dressmaker’s trade, if she had to earn her living? And why was she above anybody’s kitchen, with all her French airs and doll-baby’s face? She had nothing to boast of in the way of a father, and her grandfather’s property was mortgaged.

“No,” Bel was saying, with her pretty light laugh, “you are not speaking correctly, Monsieur.”

Bel did not love Miss Jue Dekker, but she loved this tasteful, comfortable sitting-room; it was a room to practice in, to read in, to dream dreams in, to be altogether happy in—if Miss Jue were not in it.

“Miss Bel,” said Perez, “I suppose, out of courtesy, I should come to you.”

“O no,” she returned hastily, “we have no room like this. I love to see it once a week. And, then—” but how could she say that it was an in-

expressible relief to get away from the constant demands of her grandfather.

Once she had belonged all to herself; and now she did not belong at all to herself.

The next English words that Miss Jue caught were: "Miss Bel, is your own education finished?"

"I thought so—but since you talked to me I do not think so. What is my education?"

"I will tell you what Mr. Ruskin thinks it is. He thinks you should be taught to spin, weave and sew; to learn to cook all ordinary food exquisitely, to be disciplined in the practice of vocal music; to be taught gentleness to all brute creatures, finished courtesy to your own sex and to mine, to speak truth with rigid care, to obey orders with the precision of a slave."

"I do obey grandpapa's orders with the precision of a slave," sighed Bel. "I read when I am tired, I talk when I can think of nothing to say; I sing when my throat is sore, and I stay in the house when I am in agony to rush out into the air and scream. You are looking at me, Miss Jue. I am not at all sweet and patient towards poor grandpapa."

"I should think you would be ashamed to confess it," was the hard reply. "You are dependent

upon him for every mouthful you eat, and yet you grudge him a little daily service."

"I said I was bad," said Bel, sorrowfully. "I cried about it last night. I am not *willing*. At first I loved to do everything, but now I am weary of the staying in and never having time to write letters to France. And he rebukes me if I sew too much or knit too much, and forget him."

"You deserve rebuke," was the unrelenting reply.

"Mamma does not think so," said Bel, quickly.

"She is as selfish as you are. She wants a home in her idleness, as you do."

"You mistake, madame," cried the girl, flushing, "mamma pays her board."

"Julia, you forget yourself," said Perez, sharply, "these things surely do not concern you."

"Selfishness and idleness and extravagance always concern me," answered Miss Jue, in her most virtuous tone, "and ingratitude and shirking duty is the worst of all."

"I will be grateful," promised Bel. "But this morning it was all so new to me. I did not know America was like this,—I wanted to be out in the sounds and the shining lights."

"And you grudged coming to me," said Perez.

"Yes, monsieur, I did. But in no other way could I get out into it, at all."

"Would you like to drive with me? I will show you miles of it."

"O no!" cried Bel, looking distressed.

"She is staying away from her grandfather too long now," Miss Jue announced, snapping her watch.

"O no," said Bel, innocently: "I told him the lesson would be an hour and a half this morning."

"Is this English what you call French?" inquired Miss Jue, tartly.

"Mr. Perez, speak French, please," entreated Bel.

"I can't," said Perez, seriously. "I cannot translate all I wish to say into French. I wish to tell you the rest of Mr. Ruskin's views concerning your education."

The red shawl was thrown back over her chair, and the light blue shoulders and the fluffy yellow hair rested against it. A large volume was open in her lap, and both hands were resting upon it. She had been reading aloud from it. Her pupil sat at the other side of the fire with his legs crossed (after begging pardon for the ease of his position), his hands also, holding a book; but his head was

thrown back, and he was watching his teacher, as he taught her about her education. Miss Jue had said to herself more than once, that he earned himself the dollar an hour he had promised to pay his make-believe teacher. She had no faith in his sudden desire to perfect himself in French. If the girl wanted to earn money, she could find something for her to do in the kitchen; or she might sweep on Fridays.

“Mr. Ruskin says you must learn the natural history of the place you live in, and you must know Latin—”

“I know a little.”

“Do girls ever know more than a little of anything?” was the second interruption.

“And you must know the history of five cities. Guess which cities they are.”

“Paris,” was the quick guess.

“No.”

“Paris is worth knowing about,” said Bel, jealously.

“Guess again.”

“London.”

“Of course, London.”

“Rome.”

“Yes.”

"Athens."

"Yes."

"Jerusalem."

"Perhaps he takes for granted that you know about Jerusalem."

"Hebron," she ventured.

"Where's Hebron?"

"I do not know. Mr. Prosper Dekker does. He wrote about it."

"Go on, please. I said five; you have guessed three. London, Rome, Athens."

"New York."

He laughed. "No, you little Yankee."

"Pekin." Bel seemed to be enjoying the fun of it.

"No."

"Then I do not know," she said, decidedly.

"Two cities in Europe."

"St. Petersburg."

"No."

"I do not know. I am not learned."

"You are *very* ignorant if you forget Venice and Florence. Don't you know something about them?"

"I knew their names."

"You did not just now. Mr. Ruskin would say your education had been deplorably neglected."

"You did not know about Hebron," was the repartee, with a touch of sauciness, at which Miss Jue frowned.

At first, this girl was so shy, she could scarcely raise her eyes; and now, she was absolutely disrespectful. Miss Jue had felt all along that she was a deceitful piece.

"That is in Prosper's line. I suppose it's in the Bible," he returned, carelessly.

"Do you not know about the Bible?"

"No, Miss Bel, I acknowledge to my shame I do not."

"Is it not worth knowing?" she inquired, earnestly.

"The wisest men that have ever lived think so."

"Then why do you not know it?"

"Because I am not wise," he said, easily.

"I would rather be wise; I wish to know it, like Mr. Prosper Dekker."

"Well! in a prolonged breath, "I *should* call that presumption."

Perez laughed at his sister's tone, and Bel looked uncomprehending; she did not quite understand the signification of the last word, or why it could have anything to do with learning what Mr. Prosper Dekker knew.

"Monsieur, we are not reading French," rebuked the French teacher, demurely.

After the lesson was finished, and Bel had wound the red shawl about her head and shoulders, she went to Miss Jue and stood before her penitently.

"I *am* ungrateful, and I am glad you told me. So long I was afraid to come, and so long I had no home that was like a real home, that I was unhappy, and thought nothing good would come to make me happy. And now I am so happy; the only trouble is that my grandpapa loves me too dearly. I was wicked to be so weary. I will go home and not be weary of serving him. We do not grieve about poor papa as at the first, and I have nothing to make me sad or unhappy till the next sorrow comes. I will be good now while nothing sad is happening to me."

Miss Jue pricked her finger nervously; it was in her heart that the words and the attitude were a pretty piece of acting; but when she looked up into the troubled eyes that were shining through happy tears, she found no voice for rebuke.

"Come over between times," she said, cordially. "I am glad that you like my sitting-room. Perez

has some books about those cities; you may come over and read them."

Self-contradictory Miss Jue was ashamed of herself for her impulsiveness ; but then she might lose the books or soil them, if she took them home.

"Oh, may I?" cried Bel, joyously, "I would be too happy to sit here and read while grandpapa takes his nap. When he awakes aunt Marie will beckon to me at the window. Thank you, Madame."

Red Riding Hood ran across the street and rushed all in a glow into grandfather's presence.

"There was no wolf, grandpapa; Miss Jue was very good to me to-day."

XVII.

ALMOST A WOMAN.

THE silver glitter of that winter day Bel was sure she would never forget; she wrote about it to Lizette and to Janet Dermot; these two, with her English schoolmates in England, and the chatterbox, Ellinor, were Bel's only girl friends; grandfather allowed her no time to make friends in the neighborhood.

"I lost her mother," he explained to Miss Jue. "I am determined to keep this girl safe under my wings. I am determined that she shall not be an hour away from me unless I know where she is, and who is with her. If I could go about with her that would be another thing. Do you think she pines and frets because I keep her shut up?" he questioned, anxiously.

"I would like to see the girl that wouldn't," interposed Miss Marietta, "all young things want freedom."

"Let the young things behave themselves then," declared the old man, with the look that Isobel Kellinger called "dangerous."

"It is time to stop when that look comes," she had told Bel.

"I will not if I am right," said Bel. "I have talked that look away."

"You are the only one who can do it then," was the laughing rejoinder; "he crushes me with his steel blue eyes."

Bel's prison-house, as her mother sometimes named the sitting-room, was a very pleasant place of confinement; it was the only large room in the small farmhouse; two rooms had been thrown into one and a bay window added that year Hope Devoe ran away from her father; he had sent her to her cousins, and had the changes made as a birth-day surprise.

Hope thanked him with a silent, convulsive embrace; while in the city she had seen Captain Kellinger and had promised for his sake to steal away from her old father. He was white-haired and sixty-five, then, and that was more than twenty-one years ago.

Her grandfather was the most aged person Bel had even seen; had he lived a century she could

not have regarded him with greater veneration; and yet, to the surprise of them all, she withstood him to his face.

Miss Jue said she knew her power.

It was two months since Bel had sent over the sea her description of that January thaw, and the April sunshine streamed in at Miss Jue's windows.

Grandfather was taking his long afternoon nap, with Aunt Marie sewing at his side; the two Isobels were over the way; the elder Isobel had won her way to Miss Jue's heart in some fashion unaccountable to them both, and a day seldom passed that one or the other did not "run over."

The attraction to Bel this Saturday afternoon was a book on one of the five cities in which she had become interested; the attraction to her mother was the presence of Prosper Dekker; she felt "safe" with him.

When she entered the sitting-room, she found Bel and her book in a distant corner; Miss Jue, as usual, hovering around her sewing basket; and the two young men standing on the hearth-rug with their backs to the fire. Perez was speaking in the bantering manner he had a way of assuming with his grave cousin. Prosper Dekker stood

with more erectness than when he had walked the deck of the Goodspeed; there was a health tint about his temples and forehead, and a springiness in his motions that contrasted well with the old listless attitudes.

He had passed through the fire, and he had not been burned.

After throwing aside her shawl and the white cloud that she had wound about her head, Mrs. Kellinger seated herself at Miss Jue's side and drew her pretty fancy work from her pocket.

The dead black of her dress heightened the freshness of her beauty. She had fastened a cap of white crape over the shining waves of her dark hair; beneath it her eyes shone with a chastened light, and her lips were tremulous, and shy, and sweet.

"I am afraid all the time," she had said to Prosper Dekker.

"Do you trust in God, this time you are afraid?" he asked.

She answered: "I don't know him. I haven't thought about him."

Bel had loved her mother when she was gay and bright, when she laughed and sang and danced; but now, in her sorrow and her fear, she told her:

"Mamma, I love you more than I *can*."

While the ladies were putting their heads together over the new fancy work Mrs. Kellinger had brought, and while Bel was lost in Venice, the conversation between the gentlemen upon the hearth-rug became more serious.

“The conscious life of every individual man, essentially consists in an action and reaction between his mind and all that is outside him—the ‘Ego and the Non Ego,’” quoted the voice of Prosper; and Bel lifted her eyes to listen. To listen to the cousins talking to each other was second only to have Mr. Perez talk to her alone. The French lesson had degenerated to English conversation, and books were often laid aside that teacher and pupil might talk to each other about people not bound in books: Perez and Isobel.

The next quotation was more clear to her:

“The real self-formation of the Ego commences with his consciousness of the ability to determine his own course of thought and action.”

Mrs. Kellinger was listening, also, with a mind only a little less receptive than the younger mind of wide-awake Isobel.

“My time is coming late,” she said to Prosper Dekker: “but I know it is coming. I never had

any one to tell me, and I am one of the kind that has to be *told*."

She had told him the story of her husband's death; and then with broken words and sobs, the story of their last parting; and how his hopeless face, and the dash of the water, awoke her in the middle of the night.

"It has brought me to my senses."

He had added: "And to your heart."

The new stitch was laid aside. Miss Jue acknowledged that cousin Prosper was one of the few people she cared to listen to. She caught the word "superstition," and hastened to say:

"I saw a superstition last night. An Irish girl who lives up the road a mile, was here last night visiting in the kitchen, and I went out just as she stood in the door to go. It was dark last night, no moon and no stars, and I said to her: 'Mary, aren't you afraid?' 'Oh, no,' she said: "'I made the sign of the cross before I started.' I wanted to tell her she was a deluded, superstitious thing. Sign of the cross, indeed!"

"Lady Mary Wortley Montagu writes, that when the Grecians were inoculated they had it done after the sign of the cross, one small wound in the middle of the forehead, one on

the breast, and one on each arm," replied her cousin Prosper.

"That was nonsense," declared Miss Jue's strong voice.

"I hope it was not. I hope they felt that they were doing it, as we are commanded to do all things—in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"I don't believe they did," with an indignant snip with her scissors.

"I neither believe nor disbelieve about any particular individual," returned Prosper smiling. "I simply do not know. If that girl, last night, loved his cross, and trusted him who was nailed to it; I cannot think that the Lord was displeased at her manifestation of it."

"If she did—" supplemented Miss Jue.

"And not knowing we cannot judge—I mean, I cannot,"—he replied, with the suspicion of a twinkle in his deep-set eyes.

Had he been like Miss Jue, he would have looked like her. Often she traced a slight resemblance, and was proud of it. In her own way she loved her young cousin Prosper; more like a man than like a woman. She loved people of whom she was proud.

Might she think of the cross when she was

afraid, Mrs. Kellinger was asking herself. Not to make the "sign" of it, but to think of it, as he meant. She was always afraid when she awoke after dreaming of the sea.

"And then counting *beads*," continued Miss Jue, in her tone of strong disgust. "A bead is a senseless thing."

"*Bead* was the Anglo-Saxon word for prayer," said Perez: "counting beads is therefore simply counting one's prayers."

"As if one had to know!" said Bel. "I have seen those rosaries all my life. I thought once I would like to have one."

"To count your prayers?" asked Miss Jue.

Bel colored; she had thought of that. It was when a French girl at school had in her devoted love to her, sought to bring her into her own church. What kept her when she had no one to know or care? Bel knew now, that it was the Lord who had been watching over her all her life. He had cared when she was forlorn.

"Do you remember that an angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne?"

Bel's bright face brightened; were any of her childish, foolish prayers there? On the golden altar before the throne? Her prayers to-day were that she might be more *glad* to belong to grand-papa.

"Speaking of superstitions," said Perez, breaking the silence which followed Prosper's question: "it was anciently supposed that if a witch made a waxen image of any one, and hung it by the fire, as the image wasted away so would the original."

Bel's laugh rang through the room.

"Would you make an image of anybody if that were true, Miss Bel?" asked Perez, with the utmost seriousness.

"I will of you, if you persist in speaking English to me, as you did this morning," she said with laughing eyes.

"Another superstition is," he went on, "that the Santo Casa at Loretto, was supposed to be the house in which the Virgin was born, it having been supernaturally transplanted from Galilee to Italy, and placed in a wood at midnight."

"Some people believe anything," said Miss Jue.

"You said yesterday you wouldn't be married on a Friday," he said, teasingly.

"But I did not add—nor any other day, she retorted, with unsmiling humor.

"And you do not believe that monkeys refrain from talking that they may not be made to work?" he continued.

"I believe that shirking is left for lazy human beings."

"As you scolded me this morning for lazily preferring horseback riding to raking your flower beds for exercise."

"I believe that brain work does make people physically lazy," she said, sharply, "and you are no exception."

He laughed, and tossed a folded newspaper at her head.

"Jue thinks I am too lazy to believe in works as emphatically as she does."

"Mr. Perez, what do you mean by *works*?"

Bel dropped her book on the nearest table and went to her mother, standing beside her chair with her hand laid upon her shoulder.

The thought shot through Miss Jue's mind: "I wish somebody loved me like that."

A small second cousin, ill to-day in an orphan asylum, might have loved her; but Miss Jue, knowing all her loneliness, had never one thought of

taking the child into her own home. She did not like to be bothered with other people's children; to be loved by other people's children was a way she had not thought to put it. She had told herself with bitterness against him that the Lord had not done much for her naturally, and had never thought to ask him to do ten times as much for her through grace.

Like Isobel Kellinger, she had to be "told," unlike Isobel Kellinger, she was not yet ready to be told.

"Works, Miss Bel! Meriting the divine approval by what I do, I suppose—and meriting it to such a degree that I am saved by it; my doings thus becoming my passport to heaven."

"But you do *not* believe that," she decided.

"How do you know that?"

"Because," she hesitated, "you have good common sense, and you *know* you cannot do every good thing faultlessly."

"You seem to know it."

"About myself? Yes."

"And about me?" in his most provoking tone.

But she bent over her mother and would not answer.

"I do not believe—I know in fact that I would

not assist at the washing of the feet that Greville witnessed. The pilgrims sit on benches and under their feet are small wooden tubs. The women sit in the same way. A princess and a number of Roman ladies washed the feet of the women. A very old woman had sores on her feet, produced by the itch; the princess handled them very tenderly. It was a real washing of dirty feet; no sham about it," said Perez, after waiting a second for the answer that was not ready.

"It is a Bible command," said Miss Jue.

"Have you ever obeyed it?" inquired her brother.

"As often as you have," she retorted.

"Bel obeys it every night," said Bel's mother, "washing and rubbing his feet at bed-time gives grandfather a good night's rest."

"Who did it before you came?" asked Miss Jue.

"Marietta did it once a week," answered Mrs. Kellinger, "but Bel found it soothed him, and she insisted upon the daily bathing."

"Do you like to do it, Miss Bel?" inquired Perez.

"I like to do things for grandpapa," she evaded.

"I did not know it was in the Bible."

"They did not teach you to read the Bible over there, then," said Miss Jue.

"She reads to grandfather every day," her mother hastened to say.

"Prosper, how do you like your new farm?" interposed Perez, watching the deepening tint of Bel's cheeks.

"I have liked it a long time."

"But you haven't owned it a long time."

"Ten days have I been its proud and happy owner. Miss Bel, it is not in the Basque province, but I want you to come and see it when the country is green, and the shore is alive with gay pleasure seekers."

"If I *could*!" said Bel; "but oh, mamma, grandpapa would never let us go, would he?"

"Never while he is in his present state of mind; I will promise to bring you back safe, but he would not trust me."

"Pine away, and he will see that you need sea air," advised Perez.

"I cannot pine away," laughed Bel; "he says I grow rosier every day."

The Basque provinces! And this was the Mr. Dekker of whom she had been so afraid; how different that cabin from this room! How different herself—then and now!

"I want you both for the month of August,

when Perez and Jue come to me; my trusted old housekeeper is already at her post; I will show you one of the finest spots in America, Miss Bel."

"I am afraid you cannot," said Bel, discontentedly.

"I will hunt up another lost granddaughter," proposed Perez; "you never told him about that little sister you had hidden away who is more like your mother than even yourself?"

"No," laughed Bel, "and if she were in existence, he would not make the exchange."

She was watching the window opposite from her post behind her mother's chair. "There's my signal, mamma, the shade is raised; I must go instantly."

"Poor little prisoner," said her mother, fondly.

"Give him a bigger dose of paregoric next time," advised Perez.

With a reproachful glance at him, Bel wound herself up in her red shawl.

"I do not like to have you laugh at my grandpapa."

"I beg your pardon," said the offender: "it was cruel; he is a dear old man. I will come over and read to him all the evening, to prove that my re-

pentance is real. He snubbed me last time, but I'll try again."

"Oh, thank you," Bel accepted joyfully. "Your reading pleases him best of all."

He opened the door for her and stood on the piazza while she crossed the street. The old man's chair was at the window; the white head was bobbing against the pane.

"It is making a woman of you, little girl," he said, half aloud, as he went in to the others: "and your mother's sorrow is making a woman of her."

Would any happening, or any service make a woman of his sister Jue?

"I am to stay to tea," announced Mrs. Kellinger, as he re-entered; with tone and manner as girlish as that of the girl he had watched crossing the street.

"I have promised her oysters and pickled peaches," added the housekeeper.

"And Prosper has promised talk, I'll be bound," said the professor.

XVIII.

PROSPER'S TALK.

“Do you not think the waiting people should have the sunniest faces in the world?”

The three had drawn nearer the fire; not for the sake of the heat; for the night was mild, out in the darkness, but the blaze allured them. Mrs. Kellinger sat between the two, on a lower chair; her work in her lap, and her fingers idle.

Miss Jue despised idleness and idle people. Her fingers flew over her coarse knitting; she prided herself upon her charitableness: these heavy stockings were for an Old Man's Home she had visited. Mrs. Kellinger's work was for herself; luxurious black silk stockings.

“Pride and luxury and love of ease,” sighed Miss Jue, in the depths of her heart, as she looked at the half-finished dainty stocking. Such a small foot! She said she wore number two! How could she be listening to serious words with that bit of vanity in her lap?

"I think that depends upon what they are waiting for!" answered Miss Jue. "You wouldn't expect me to wait for bad news with a cheerful face."

"If people expected good news, there would be more good news to expect."

"I feel as if nothing pleasant would ever come to me again," said Mrs. Kellinger. "I have thrown away my chances, and my life is wrecked—at forty."

"That is rather hard on you, if you live to be as old as Mr. Devoe," was Prosper's quick answer. "Half of your life to be wrecked, floating around, a picturesque feature of the landscape, that is all."

"Prosper, how can you talk nonsense?" asked Miss Jue, sternly.

"I answer her nonsense with nonsense."

"Is it nonsense?" inquired the widow, lifting her eyes with serious questioning.

"It is worse; it is wickedness; it is distrust of God's wisdom and care for you."

"He is very good to care for me," she answered, humbly.

"You will think it a strange question to ask, but can you thank God for leaving you to sin?"

"I think it is a very strange question," said

Miss Jue, "and I can say that I do not thank him for such a wicked thing."

"As what? Leaving you to sin?"

"As sinning, I meant."

"I know somebody whose first thought when convicted of a hitherto unrecognized sin is: 'I am glad God has shown me that *that* is in me.' Sin is in us, and the mercy of God opens our eyes to it, through our doings, our ambitions, through the undone things in our lives, often times in our very prayers it shows its evil self. May we not thank him that he has shown us our true selves; shown us ourselves as his eye sees us? We are cross about something, or we think an unkind thought about some one because we are *jealous*; prove the thought to its depth and we shall find that hideous thing at the bottom; or we are disdainful about some favor received because we are too proud to be under obligation to the donor. Pride, envy, jealousy are at the very roots of our hearts, and unless they break out in evil ways, how shall we know it? When one cannot see beauty or goodness in another, it is because envy blinds our eyes. I do not know of anything that touches me as it touches me for two who might be rivals, to admire each other. Two women admiring and praising

each other, and two men admiring and praising each other, is finer to me than the finest painting I saw abroad."

"You do not often see it," said Miss Jue's tart voice.

"You see Bel admire me," said Bel's mother.

"That isn't all I see," was Prosper's rejoinder.

"The twenty years between us keep us from standing in each other's way."

"No one will know that, Mrs. Kellinger, unless you divulge it," remarked Prosper.

"I know I look too young," apologized Mrs. Kellinger smiling, "but I am her step-mother, all the same."

"It is hard for one woman to see another have everything that she hasn't," admitted Miss Jue; "the youth, the beauty, the admiration, the something ahead that she has lost—or never had. You have no pity for such a case, Prosper; you are hard on women."

"I think of the beauty of womanhood as possible to every woman; woman, like youth, is but another name for beauty and gentleness. If a woman loves, she is sure to be loved; a loveless woman is an unloving woman; to be unloving is the hardest lot of all."

"You can't love everybody," was the short reply.

"If one tries hard, they will find out," he returned, smiling at her.

"I love so few," said Mrs. Kellinger. "I love Bel a thousand times better than I did a year ago; and once I did not care much for my own, only sister. I do not love Uncle Harold when he's hard to live with."

"What a short list!" said Prosper, smiling.

"I have no daughter; I have no sister," said Miss Jue's hard voice.

"Perez is a good fellow."

"Oh, you and Perez admire each other," returned Miss Jue, discontentedly. "I do not think I see yet that it is such a good thing for us to fall into sin."

"I have had a joyful time over my sins, over my forgiven sins," was his quick reply.

"Mr. Dekker, I cannot think of you as *sinning*," said Mrs. Kellinger, with great earnestness; "what do you do that's wrong?"

"I distrust the wisdom of God. I try to take my life into my own hands; I am shamefully proud of myself when I am praised."

"I am glad to hear you say that. It does me good to hear people speak of *special* sins; every-

body will confess to a general sinfulness. Are you jealous, sometimes?" she continued, anxiously.

"I confess it."

"Envious?"

"Once in my life I was envious for ten minutes."

"Are you proud?"

"So proud that I confess it on my knees."

"But you are kept from many sins?"

"Truly, I am *kept*; that is the secret of it."

Miss Jue knitted faster and faster; Prosper was as queer as Mrs. Kellinger; she had no taste for such personalities; she thought them ill-bred. And she had said to the neighbors that Mrs. Kellinger was the most perfect lady she had ever met.

"A day of no wilful, rebellious sin is as really God's providence as a day of confessed and forgiven sin; his mercy happens every minute. His mercy happens when there is no happening. Being kept out of danger is as truly his watchfulness as being kept safely in danger; being kept from sin is as truly his loving kindness as being forgiven when we have sinned. I love to give thanks for the one as well as the other."

"As we grow older we are glad of having nothing happen, I know that," acknowledged Miss Jue, with emphasis.

"Having nothing dreadful happen to me is all the happiness I want," said Mrs. Kellinger, speaking with difficulty. "I used to be unhappy when nothing exciting was going on."

"And now you are waiting for nothing to happen!" said Miss Jue, lightly.

"I can think of nothing but losing Isobel or Marie."

"What do you expect to do all your life?" asked Miss Jue.

"Stay with Isobel as long as her grandfather lives, and then I suppose we shall live on together somewhere. Mr. Canfield who holds his mortgage (you know about the mortgage) has promised not to foreclose as long as he lives; the rest—all that's left is willed to Bel; we shall have enough to live on and take care of Marie, the dear old, unselfish, hard-working, loving thing, who has nothing of her own."

"That is a very quiet plan," said Prosper.

"Your daughter will marry, of course," suggested Miss Jue, watching the effect of her words upon both countenances. Miss Jue prided herself upon "seeing through" people.

"O yes, I hope she will," exclaimed Mrs. Kellinger, brightly. "I *am* jealous of that constant

‘grandpapa,’ but I shall not be jealous of somebody else. But I can’t think of it; Bel isn’t seventeen, as American girls go.”

“If I may be allowed an opinion,” volunteered Prosper, with his usual straightforwardness, “I do believe that if a woman miss a happy marriage she must take a second-rate happiness in some other life.”

“Then my happiness is second rate,” laughed Miss Jue, harshly.

Did Mr. Dekker think hers was second rate, Mrs. Kellinger reasoned; no, her “happiness” had been downright misery, and he knew it. She would be kinder to John if he might only come back to her. He had told her she was born perverse; he would think it now, could he know that she wished him back; but it was not that she loved him better, it was that she might atone for her selfishness. With her opened eyes how selfish her life appeared! How different was Bel’s devotion to her grandfather!

“Mr. Dekker, I want to know what my life means, and what is the good of it—if there’s any good of it,” John Kellinger’s wife said, contritely.

“Inquire of the Lord; he will show you day by day.”

"But—I am not a Christian—yet. I have gone such a little way towards it."

"Towards the Father? The Prodigal's little way was a long way off from the Father. But he saw him coming, and did not wait, but ran to meet him."

"Marie and I go to church. I understand something. Bel can never be spared."

"Do you read the New Testament?" he asked, kindly.

"Yes, and I listen when Bel reads aloud."

"Do you pray?"

"I have prayed ever since—that night," in a low, abashed tone.

"Go on step by step as you are led."

"Is that all?" she asked, incredulously.

"To be willing to be led? Have you given yourself to God, in the name of Christ?"

"No."

"Will you?"

"Miss Jue was knitting nervously.

"I do not know how."

"Ask Miss Isobel how she gives herself to her grandfather; and give yourself like that, and ten times more. You are not your own."

Both listeners were silent.

"Prosper, why don't you become an Evangelist?"

"A messenger of glad tidings? I trust I have."

"Instead of having a church of your own; why do you not rest summers and go about in the winter among the churches? I know a younger man than you, who does it; and crowds flock to hear him."

"The Lord called him—he has not called me."

"Perhaps he will."

"Perhaps. He will speak loud enough for me to hear."

"But, Mr. Dekker, isn't there anything for me to *do*?" inquired the anxious voice of the other listener.

"'If any man hear my voice and *open the door*.' That is enough for one life time. Open the door, and *keep it open*. You will see what will happen when the Lord enters in at your heart's open door. He will keep you busy. A life time is a short working time. Years of preparation at one end, and old age, sometimes coming early, to shorten it at the other end. But how few years Christ had to finish his Father's business! I want to give the work of my life Christ's finish: an active submission to God's will. Who ever loved God's will as he did?"

Miss Jue could sit delighted in church listening to her cousin, but at her own fireside it was not so pleasant; for, sometimes he expected a reply. It was a marvel to her that Mrs. Kellinger's tongue could glide along as it did; she was sure the readiness had come with her foreign travel. She believed she would talk to the Queen of England as easily as she talked to her. How queer it was for two people to sit and talk like that! Such things were well enough in church, or on Sundays; but they seemed out of place on week days.

"Do you think any one of your sins is forgiven?" she came out of her reverie to hear Prosper ask. What would *she* say to that?

"I do not know that *any* one is," was the anxious reply.

"If you are forgiven for one sin, are you not forgiven for that one sin as perfectly as you ever will be? Are you not as free from its consequences as you will be at the judgment seat of Christ? Do you think God's forgiveness means for a little while, and not forever?" he asked, very earnestly and tenderly.

"I am not clear about anything; I know nothing about the Bible; all I know is I am bad, and I have been punished, and I want to be good,"

was the reply, with the simplicity and directness of a child.

"For fear of further punishment?" he asked, sternly.

"That has something to do with it, but not all."

"Do you desire to give every waking and sleeping moment to his service?"

"Now, Prosper," interposed Miss Jue, "who will do our work if we neglect it like that? We are not in heaven yet."

"We are to think of *his* work; he has put that into our hand. Let us put the cares of our life into his hand. I am sure that the better we do his work, the better will our own work (if you must disconnect them) be done. Elijah was too weary to cook his dinner that time after he had worked so hard for the Lord and so the Lord sent an angel to do it for him."

"Angels don't cook my dinners," muttered Miss Jue.

"Did you ever neglect a dinner for his sake—for his special work?" asked Prosper, with a smile.

"No; and I never expect to. I should have to go without my dinner," with sudden asperity.

"And I imagine some saints would go hungry if it were not for hard-working sinners."

"You will never know whether you will or not,

cousin Jue. Mrs. Kellinger, Miss Isobel tells me that you play sometimes."

He listened with his eyes closed, while she played, or rather he did not listen.

Was he ready for the work of an Evangelist? Was he fitted by mental endowment and spiritual gifts? What about his physical condition? Nothing about it. He would listen and obey. He would watch for every indication of his Lord's purpose in his life, whether it were of further waiting or further working. He remembered those days and nights in Florence when the battle within himself had waxed hot; how at last, his rebellion was utterly subdued, and he had cried: "Give, or take, Lord, only take *me* and use me."

The next day he had gone to Annie Pierrepont and told her that she need not break her promise, for he would break his; no entreaty of hers would induce him to bind her again. Then how the laughing light had flashed back into her eyes, and every day she had grown stronger.

There was no "week day" in his life after this, every day was a day of consecrated service. Literally, he had no will of his own. Miss Jue felt this concerning him, in the small measure in which she felt everything that was higher than herself.

XIX.

PEREZ'S TALK.

MARIETTA was in the kitchen, in the hour that her sister sat between her two friends over the way, and thought and listened, believed and purposed.

Marietta was usually in the kitchen, whether it were morning, noon, or night. Her sister declared that she was a slave; and that she loved her bondage.

"I love this kitchen," Marietta returned, in her comfortable fashion, "and I love my work in it. I was tired of being shut up with Uncle Harold. I was glad enough to send that slovenly woman away, and come and take her place. My kitchen is a palace compared to hers."

Marietta was a little thing. Her head scarcely touched her sister's shoulder; her eyes were a lighter brown than Mrs. Kellinger's, and her hair was thickly streaked with gray; she was so fragile that a dress of Isobel's hung loosely upon her.

This winter she weighed exactly ninety-five pounds and three-quarters. Hopping about like a bird, she was about the house from morning till night; she was like a bird, also, in her frequent bursts of song. Her voice was, even at her age, the sweetest thing about her.

From her childhood she had done the neglected things; when others shirked, she was ever the busiest; what no one else loved to do, she esteemed her precious privilege; when she reviewed her busy years, all she could think of was the things she had left undone.

She was hopping about the kitchen, when Perez Dekker lifted the old-fashioned knocker of the front door. Visitors were rare in the evening. She untied her gingham apron, smoothed back the loose gray hairs, and with the brass candlestick in her hand went to the door.

"Mr. Dekker," she exclaimed, "are you brave enough to come again?"

"I have taken my life in my hand. I thought he might permit Miss Isobel to spend the time with her mother. Prosper is there, and she likes to hear him talk."

"Are you bereft of your senses?" she asked, laughing low; "that is just the reason she mustn't go."

"And the reason I musn't come! Do you think he will let me in? Assure him that I am perfectly harmless, more so than I look."

With the ceremonious air of ushering in a visitor, Marietta opened the door of the sitting-room, and announced:

"Mr. Perez Dekker."

Grandfather's chair had been wheeled to the round table in the bay-window; he was bending forward, turning the leaf of an illustrated volume; the blue figure knelt on the carpet at his side; the bright head nestled against his shoulder. The old man's hair and beard shone like burnished silver in the lamp-light.

"Mr. Dekker, good evening, sir," with a stately inclination of the silver head.

Grandfather's tone was not cordial; it was more sullen than dignified. He intended that the dignity of his greeting should prevent further entrance; the young man would be forced to state his errand and leave.

Isobel's eyes were glad and shy. She had looked over those pictures so many times; she had done everything for grandfather so many times.

"Will you sit down?" she asked, rising to her feet in slight confusion.

"If I do not intrude."

Grandfather's muttered reply was inaudible. Perez deliberately seated himself at the table, and took up a book; his sister said his fingers ached unless they held a book.

"We will finish these pictures another time, grandpapa, dear."

Growling rather above his breath, grandfather gave the volume a push, and it tumbled heavily upon the carpet. With a laugh Perez and Isobel lifted it together. Grandfather did not smile.

"Where's Marietta? Is she making bread in the kitchen?" he inquired.

"Not Saturday night," said Isobel.

"Let her come and entertain the company then."

"Do not disturb her," entreated Perez, easily. "I have found a book here. But speaking of bread reminds me of something I read the other night. Dr. Gobel writes that in a village on the White Sea, he found the people using a peculiar form of earth in addition to flour in the preparation of bread."

"That's a traveller's story," contradicted the old man.

"Chemical analysis proves it to be purely

mineral and unfit for digestion. Hot biscuit with them must be rather worse than with us."

"The girls should go to school and learn better than to use it, shouldn't they, grandpapa?" asked Isobel in her laughing voice.

Grandfather had motioned her to a chair at his side; she raised her eyes from her crocheting to speak to him.

"School doesn't do much for girls but make them flighty and useless, as I can see," said grandfather testily.

"Now, grandpapa! But you don't mean a French school?"

"Home is the best place for girls."

"Until they grow up," retorted Isobel, with dancing eyes.

"And then they want to go to somebody's else home," said grandfather, in his whining tone. "Girls are made just to be disappointments."

"Like my grandmother," said Bel, mischievously.

"Like your mother," he returned, in a loud, sharp voice.

"I am glad that girls are made to study physiology now-a-days," Perez hastened to say, for the young girl was flushed and tearful. "Dr. Bennet presents the subject forcibly in the opening lecture

of the ladies' course in the Edinburgh University. Women are our nurses, Mr. Devoe; we surely want excellent nurses. He says women have more to do with the preservation and duration of human life than even men. Our lives are in these girls' hands." Mr. Perez shot a glance at the girl opposite him.

"Bel Hope knows that my life is in her hands," grandpapa said tremulously; "when she goes I shall go, too."

"We are neither of us going just yet, grandpapa, dear," said Bel Hope, loosening her fingers that she might caress the hand laid upon her arm.

"He will be as brave as Lady Franklin, Miss Isobel," said Perez, as he played with the edges of his book. "Do you remember about the dear old lady, at the age of eighty, setting sail to go half way round the globe to get a scrap of her husband's writing which some man had in his possession, and would not deliver to any hand but hers. She loved her husband through forty years, and then lived on through twenty years of bereavement. I wonder, Mr. Devoe, if we men are worth such devotion?"

"I think he was," returned grandfather, interested. "I like to sit by my warm fire, and hear

about what those poor fellows had to go through."

"I fear the fire is not warm enough to-night then, to make such a book enjoyable."

"I don't want reading to-night; I want to go to bed early," he replied, with rude directness.

Isobel frowned as she drooped over her work. Perez smiled and opened his book; clearly he was not rendering the evening pleasanter to grandpapa's nurse.

"What time is it?" grandfather demanded, uneasily.

"Not eight o'clock, grandpapa," was the answer, with quick displeasure.

"Eight o'clock is late sometimes."

"Shall we finish looking at the pictures?" she asked, impatiently.

"No, the light hurts my eyes. I had supper early, and am hungry, I want some hot bread and milk."

Isobel rolled up her crocheting; the expression of her lips was not sweet.

"Don't *you* go;" he cried, "ask Marietta."

As she arose Mr. Dekker arose, also; he was both amused and provoked. Why could not the old fellow let her have a little peace? "I shall not dare to come again." It was rude, but he spoke in French.

They passed out into the dark hall together; grandfather called out: "Hurry back, Bel Hope, don't stand in the hall."

"I am sorry, Mr. Perez," she said, "you see it is better for you not to come. No one can help me with grandpapa."

"Will he allow you to read to him?"

"O yes, I shall read until he is soundly asleep."

"Isobel, you are very good to him."

"No, I am not," she said, penitently, "I am often angry, and I do not hasten when he bids me, and sometimes I do not pity him at all. I want to go to church to-morrow, because Mr. Prosper is to preach, but he says I must not. Sunday is a weary day to him without me. He permitted me to go once, and he says I may never go again; that I can read and pray at home. So I can, but I need to be *taught*. I want to study and know."

"You have books."

"Books are not voices. It is more plain when some one speaks to me."

"Does my cousin teach you?"

"Always," said Bel; "he always shows me some new thing to do."

"Perhaps he might better have come to-night ;

he would know how to interest your grandfather; you see I am a bungler."

"I see you are very kind."

The cane was thumping upon the carpet and the querulous voice was calling, "*Bel Hope!*"

"Excuse me; was I selfish not to hasten?"

"*I* was," he returned, groping his way along the hall.

Grandfather sipped his bread and milk in sullen silence; Isobel was not sure whether she were too angry or too hurt to speak. She was not very old, but to be treated like such a *little* child! To have her friend dismissed as if he were not good enough to come! Were not the prisoners in prison permitted to see their friends?

"Here! take this bowl!" he commanded.

She took it and stood before him holding it in both hands. "You've got to stop going over there to give those heathen French lessons."

She gazed at him steadily; he kept his eyes fixed upon hers.

"They are not heathen lessons," she returned, attempting to speak lightly.

"I have said it and it is said."

"May he come here, instead?"

"No," he exclaimed, with husky loudness, bring-

ing his cane down with unusual force. "Come here and talk a lingo I can't understand!"

She turned away; her heart was bitter with rebellion; she had so little outside life; and these lessons were becoming so much to her; Mr. Perez was the only *young* presence she had about her.

"I will give you a dollar a week for doing nothing, if money is what you are hankering after."

"It is better than the money," she said, sorrowfully. "I had forgotten all about the money. Mamma gives me money, but there is no one else to speak French to me. He is like home."

"So I thought! So I knew! So I was afraid," he cried, with a mocking laugh.

"I like the pretty room, and I like the books, and I like Miss Jue when she is not cross."

"And you like Mr. Perez best of all," he said, relentlessly.

"Not best, but very much," was the answer that came at last.

"Do you like him better than the other one?"

"I like him differently. They are both very kind to me," after a longer pause.

"And I am not, I suppose. I make a slave of you," he said, with thick utterance. "My house is your prison, and you live on prison fare."

"You are not kind to me *now*, grandpapa."

"I am doing the kindest thing I know how to do. I am guarding and protecting you."

"From what?" Her innocence was irritating, and yet it pleased him.

"From the wicked world," he answered, mollified.

"Is the wicked world over there? He is not like Mr. Prosper, but he is not wicked. Mr. Prosper admires him."

"You have contradicted me times enough. Set that book down, and come here and kiss me, and promise me."

"I would rather not do either," said Isobel, wilfully. "Grandpapa, I do not love you when you treat me so. Mamma is willing that I should go over there. I never go anywhere else."

Marietta was fumbling at the door-knob out in the dark hall; as she entered, Isobel made her escape.

"I must promise to-morrow," she half sobbed. "But I will not kiss him until I love him again."

Giving an impatient shrug at the sound of the thumping cane, she fled in the dark up the stairway; then hardly knowing what she sought, she groped her confused, indignant way through seve-

ral dark rooms, and down the kitchen stairs, to the lighted kitchen. At that moment she would have "run away" from her grandfather.

The savory odor of stewed chicken, to-morrow's dinner, gave her a homely Saturday night feeling; a candle was burning on the table; Aunt Marie's newspaper, for she was a newsy little body, was spread out on the red cloth near it; two gray cats were curled up on the oil cloth in front of the stove, and a basket of cuddling early chickens had been tucked into a warm corner behind it. It was a homely place, as homely as its small mistress, and as neat and cheery.

The red shades had not been drawn down; through the window, as she stood aimlessly at the table, Bel caught a glimpse of the lighted windows over the way. The only house in America she cared for, was to be shut against her; must she always stay at home after to-night? Might she have no one to speak her beloved French words to, and might she have no more French books to read? Grandpapa had scolded about the last French book Mr. Perez had brought her, and torn out the leaf on which he had written her name; and threatened to send it back if he dared presume to buy her another. But this command was harder than that.

And she must obey, for he might not permit her to cross the street at all. Was he so jealous? But she did not love him best; she did not love him at all. She would defy him and do as she pleased; only—only—would she be like her own mamma if she did? And break her promise, and not be a comfort to him? And then it would be better if she had not come to him; she might better have stayed and taught English to the French girls at Mademoiselle's.

The cane was thumping; again, again, again. She smiled, and would not stir a step.

"Let him thump himself into good humor, then!"

"Bel, where are you?" called Aunt Marie, hurriedly, in the hall.

Bel snuffed the candle. Aunt Marie sometimes said there was news in the candle. Did she wish for any news? Oh, if somebody could tell her how long this bondage would last, and if she would ever be free! Would somebody ever come and take her away? But grandpapa might die! And then she was frightened at herself!

"Isobel Kellinger! Don't you know your grandfather wants you?"

"Yes," said Isobel, sullenly.

"What is the matter with you to-night?"

“Everything! I am as bad as I can be.”

Aunt Marie took the cover off the kettle and poked with an iron spoon among the pieces of chicken.

“Have you two been quarrelling?”

“He has been quarrelling. I have not.”

“Run in quick, then,” coaxingly.

“Aunt Marie, I do not wish to. Aunt Marie, I will not. I am going up-stairs to bed, and you may tell him so.”

“Have you kissed him good-night?” gurgled Aunt Marie, with the hot iron spoon at her lips.

“I cannot do that.”

“Then the old man, poor dear, will not sleep a wink.”

“Then we shall lie awake together,” said Bel, with a relenting sparkle in her eyes.

“Bel, don’t be stubborn,” pleaded the small woman. “I believe I have burned my tongue. He wants some of this chicken soup, and I tasted it to see if it had any flavor.”

“I am stubborn—I wish to be stubborn.”

“Then while you are being stubborn, bring me a tea cup.”

She brought the cup and stood while Aunt

Marie filled it, with no relenting in her flashing eyes or firm lips.

"I will not take it in; you cannot beguile me."

Aunt Marie spoke impatiently: "Don't be so silly, Bel; he is nothing but an old baby."

"Then why should I obey an old baby?" was the sharp retort.

"Oh, when it comes to that, he's your grandfather, you know."

"I wish he were not; I wish I had no grandfather," she cried, with a passionate sob.

"Now, Bel, you are wicked!"

"That reminds me of Madame; I was wicked in France, also."

"This is very nice," said Aunt Marie, tasting the broth from the cup, "take it in now while it is hot."

"Did you misunderstand me? I said I would not."

"I wish your mother were here!" cried Miss Devoe. "Bel, I am out of all manner of patience with you. You will never bring him around. I knew it would work mischief for that young man to come here to-night. I was half-inclined to tell him to go back home."

"I wish you had," sighed Bel.

Thump, thump, thump.

"He will wear himself out," said Marietta, crossly.

"Take it in yourself, Aunt Marie," not disrespectfully.

"He will not take it from me."

"And he certainly will not take it from me," said Bel, with a little laugh.

"Good-night, Aunt Marie."

Bel darted across the kitchen towards the door of the kitchen stairway; Aunt Marie shouted after her, and the girl tossed back a tantalizing laugh.

"I didn't think it of her," explained Aunt Marie, with slow surprise. "But Uncle Harold is a caution when his temper is up."

The cane was still thumping when Aunt Marie opened the sitting-room door.

"Where's Bel Hope?" he shouted, with all his weakened strength. His breath came short; he was leaning forward on the round head of his stout cane.

"Gone up-stairs, Uncle Harold," replied Marietta, soothingly, "girls will get tired and have to go to bed early. "This broth is delicious," she added, placing the teaspoon to his lips, "it will be cold if you do not take it quick."

"Bring her down," he muttered between the teaspoonfuls.

"Uncle Harold, do you want her to run away, like her mother?" Marietta had debated within herself before she had dared. Pushing her hand away, he screwed up his eyes and looked into her face.

"Don't you know that is what I am trying to prevent?"

"I know that is what you are doing! If you make a slave of her she *will* go. She has her mother's and father's blood both in her; her eyes are gentle but her heart is fierce."

"That's so," he muttered, uneasily, "and her eyes are fierce, sometimes; she isn't the gentle little kitten I took her to be."

"If you are kind to her she will serve you on her knees; but if you are unjust—she will hate you and deceive you and disobey you."

Would she? Was she as bad as that? Aunt Marie believed it. But she was so young! And she had so little of what other girls had.

"It isn't in her," he said, again pushing the spoon away.

"It is in her enough to come out of her," urged Aunt Marie.

"I don't see what she has got to thwart me for!" he said, chokingly, big tears rolling down his cheeks, "my wife was not any comfort to me with her will and her temper, and Hope ran away from me, and *her* daughter has come back to hold a lash over my head. I wish I was in my grave."

"Do not make other people wish it, too," advised Marietta, sternly. "Uncle Harold, if you will be reasonable you will make us love you, and if you will be tyrannical—"

"I aint tyrannical," he whimpered; "now *you* have turned against me."

By way of reply she held the cup to his lips until he had drained it.

"Sam will be up soon to put you to bed. Uncle Harold, I am not a Christian myself, but I wish with all my heart *you* were. Christians are comfortable to live with. Prosper Dekker says when a man is a Christian his dog knows it."

"I am a sight better than some Christians," he answered, fretfully. "I say my prayers every night, and I never wronged my neighbor or defrauded a man that worked for me, and you know it. The Lord is merciful."

"He is merciful to sinners," with sharp readiness, "but you are not a sinner."

"If that fellow hadn't come here with his talk it would all be well enough," he muttered, with some contrition. "Read to *me*, eh! And sit and look at her."

After Sam Watts, the workman who lived in Mr. Devoe's small house two fields distant from the barn, had come in to help the old man into his bedroom, and had tucked him in with his usual night parting: "Hope you'll sleep well, sir," Marietta went into the room to see if Bel's absence had left anything undone.

"Marietta," popping up his white head, "tell her good-night, and say, I've compromised; if Mr. Dekker will come over here to read his jabbering French, the lessons may go on! But she shan't be out of my sight."

Two hours after, as he dozed fitfully, a light step hesitated in the doorway between the sitting room and grandfather's sleeping-room, and then the step went on more surely and paused at the bedside; he was asleep, she would not awaken him; two soft warm lips touched his forehead once, and then again; the old man stirred, murmuring in his sleep: "Good-night, Bel Hope."

And then she went back to the sitting-room

fire and knelt down at her grandfather's chair and promised herself again, as in that remembered midnight at Shields, that she would give her life to him for her mother's sake; and she would always tell him the truth if it choked her to death.

XX.

SOMEBODY.

“ARE you a Christian?”

It was a question that Miss Dekker was unaccustomed to ask, but she felt constrained to prove to the girl that she was hypocritical, and not as sweet as she made people believe she was. What right had Prosper to say she was a Christian, when she had not even been baptized?

“I do not know,” answered Isobel, wonderingly.

“Are you thinking about it?” persisted Miss Jue.

Miss Jue stood on the walk outside the fence. Isobel had been weeding grandfather's nasturtiums, when Miss Jue called to her; she sprang up from her knees and ran to her. Grandfather was in his chair on the piazza, and it was almost time for him to be taken into the house.

“About myself being a Christian?” she inquired,

in a tone slightly puzzled. "I do not think I ever did."

And suppose she had, why should Miss Jue question her?

"How old are you?" asked the lady, loosening her sun-bonnet strings.

"Twenty-one. I shall be twenty-one to-morrow."

"Don't you think it is time for you to think about it?"

Whenever Miss Jue intended to be strong, she was decidedly grim. The tone might have indicated to one not understanding the words, that the question was: "Don't you think it is time for you to think about being hanged?"

"I do not know," said Bel, after a most uncomfortable pause.

"It is time you *did* know. Do you know what it is to be a Christian?" The word "Christian," had no sound of Christ in it from her lips.

"Grandfather says he is not one. I know Mr. Prosper Dekker is," evaded the girl.

"What do *you* think it is?"

"Pardon me. I said I had not thought," said Bel, with her usual refined courtesy.

"What a heathen you are!" exclaimed Miss Jue,

impatiently. "That French school did it. But you have been in this country long enough to learn better."

"What did the French school do?" inquired Bel, not saucily, but with pointed persistency.

"Don't you *care*?" cried Miss Jue, her voice rising with its shrillest tones.

"About what?" asked Bel, simply, rubbing the mould off her fore-finger; she was aware that she meant to be provoking.

"You are exasperating; you are pretending not to understand," cried the wrathful questioner.

"Mamma calls me stupid, sometimes," said Bel, dropping her eyes to hide the smile in them.

"I want to know whether you care whether you are a Christian or not."

"I told you I had not thought about myself."

"Then you are a real heathen. You have heard Prosper preach, too; and heard him talk."

"He did not ask me about myself; he talked to me about—"

"Well, about what?"

"About the Lord and his life on earth." The answer was not ready, but it came at last, and sweetly.

"Didn't that make you think about yourself, pray?"

"No, madame, it made me think about Him."

"You know he wants you to repent of your hard heart."

"He knows I do," said Isobel; "he knows I am very sorry when I do wrong—and I do something wrong every day." Isobel was in earnest now.

"What have you done to-day?"

"I was tempted to deceive grandpapa when he asked me how long I was in your garden."

Deceit was becoming hateful to her; she did not question why; she knew no more of her own growth than the bud that is brought into a perfect flower.

"Did you tell him a lie?"

"I said I did not know—but I did know that it was longer than he thought; he thought I went over to see Mary Wells, about the ironing, but I did not go. And I did not tell him I did not go; mamma went, that I might stay the longer among your flowers."

"That was very deceitful in both of you, and my innocent flowers were the innocent cause."

"No, I was the cause: I might have told the truth. And I hid the book Mr. Perez brought me last night, and did not dare tell him I saw Mr. Perez."

"I should think your grandfather *would* be provoked."

"He is," said Bel, remorsefully.

"Then why do you do such things?"

"Because I am bad, I suppose."

"Do you deceive him every day?" continued her catechist.

"Speak not so loud, please. He is watching us."

"That is more of your deceit."

If Isobel had been awkward and plain, with no pretty ways and no possible happy future, Miss Dekker would have been very kind to her. But what right had the girl to what she was denied?

"I think every night that I will not deceive him to-morrow."

"And you do?" sharply.

"Something happens, and I am not brave, and I hide it, or evade his questions."

"He will learn that you are not to be trusted. Perez loves truthfulness above all things."

The clear eyes were shadowed; and she was not true! And he would know it!

"I do not like to rebel against grandpapa."

"It is sinful to rebel, and sinful to deceive."

"Yes," assented Bel, "I am sinful."

"No wonder you are not a Christian, with these

things hindering you !” cried Miss Jue, indignantly.

“ I only think about myself when I am wrong, and then I ask forgiveness; last night I wept over something I had said to grandpapa,” with unconscious self-defence.

“ You should think about yourself,” counselled Miss Jue. “ Who will think about you if you do not think about yourself ?”

“ I forget myself when I read about the dear Lord, or think of him.” The whispered words came with uneasy utterance; it was hard to speak her precious thoughts to Miss Jue.

“ What do you think of him ?” asked Miss Jue, somewhat mollified.

“ I think that he took my sins away on his cross, and that he will give me a new heart—and I think he has—a little,” Bel said, wistfully, after another pause.

“ A little! I should think so. Rebelling, and deceiving.”

The cane was thumping the floor of the piazza; Bel turned and waved her hand.

“ I suppose I should be weeding; he likes to see me at work,” she said, in a relieved tone, coming back to words easily spoken.

"You are never idle, any way," conceded Miss Jue.

"Grandpapa says I am when I read French," said Bel, smiling; "he hates my French books and ways."

"Good-bye; he will be thumping again; I should think you would wish that cane in Jericho," said Miss Jue, unguardedly.

"I do feel tempted to burn it," said Bel, laughingly, at the arched eyebrow and emphatic gesture.

"Prosper is coming home to-night with Perez. Vacation begins to-morrow; we are going to the sea-shore for the whole month. Perez has given up his plan of going abroad to study."

"I am sighing for the sea," sighed Bel. "I tell grandpapa it would make him well."

"Nothing will make *him* well; I should think the girl would see it," muttered Miss Jue, stepping down the wooden steps in the green bank. The broad hat with its floating blue ribbons answered grandfather's call; she had purchased it, as well as the blue and white gingham she wore, with her own earnings; every Saturday morning Perez seriously laid the one dollar bill in her hand, and she as seriously said: "Thank you."

Last Saturday morning, for the first time, she

had looked disturbed; they were simply reading together; it was her pleasure as well as his—what right had she to take the money as though she earned it? Had she *ever* earned it? Was it not his stratagem to help her because she had no money of her own? With burning cheeks she resolved to refuse the dollar next week; she would return it and ask him to come for the pleasure to herself! But could she do that? What would he think of her? Must she say that she could give him no more “lessons?” And she looked forward to them all the week! How stupid she had been! She was always stupid; Miss Jue had a right to be indignant. But then she did not think of herself, and every day she thought more about the Lord, and his Father, and what he did when he was on earth. In her simple life she had so few new things to think about, she had so few girlish interests. Her growth in the truest knowledge might have been hindered, had her life been less sheltered from the world. Perez Dekker said to himself that there was time for the other things by-and-by; she was a bit of nature growing in the sunshine of grace. She had read her new English Bible through.

It was nearly sunset, and grandfather had been

assisted back to his chair in the bay window, from which he could watch the changes in the west; his faithful nurse sat beside him, her broad hat in her lap, longing with all her heart for a walk towards the sunset; a walk like one of the long walks she used to take out into the country with Lizette.

Lizette was married! How queer! Would she ever be married, or must she stay on endlessly with grandpapa? And Janet Dermot was engaged. Things were happening to some girls; if the time should pass for things to happen to her, would they never happen?

"Bel Hope, what are you thinking about?"

"Nothing," answered confused Bel Hope.

"Nothing makes you smile."

"Lizette is married; I was thinking of her."

"Do you want to go back to France?"

"O yes—O yes, indeed!" catching her breath.

"I love my beautiful France, I dreamed last night I was walking along the Seine."

"What about your beautiful America?"

"It is pretty—here," she admitted, "but I do not have the river and the mountains."

"It is good enough for me."

The old man gazed out toward the west. Bel played with her hat ribbons, checking a sigh; the

tea bell rang and she arose to bring in her grandfather's tea.

She might not go back to France, and she might not go to the sea-shore, and she must not permit the French lessons to go on, and she must live on endlessly with grandpapa. Twenty-one to-morrow! She was almost old. Her mother died before she was twenty-one.

At the tea-table Miss Devoe sat down the teapot and looked meditative; she had been meditative all day.

"Isobel," she said, impressively, "Isobel Kellinger?"

The tea-table for three was spread in the kitchen. The kitchen stove was in the shed; the kitchen was as cool and fresh as the sitting-room; Mrs. Kellinger had arranged the blackberry blossoms for the table; she said her life consisted in giving "finishing touches."

"Well," replied Mrs. Kellinger. "Well, Marietta Devoe."

The younger Isobel had come to be Bel to all of them; but she would not write herself "Bel." Mr. Perez had said it was not as pretty as Isobel. He always called her Isobel.

"When the farm needs an extra hand he boards

with Mary Wells," declared Marietta, in the tone of one announcing a discovery.

"Why yes!" answered the surprised listener.

"Mary washes and irons, scrubs and churns for us," in the same tone.

"Are you just awake to it?" laughed Mrs. Kellinger. "Bel, I wish you had gone on that blackberry tramp with me; I never *saw* them so thick."

"I am just awake to the importance of it. What do I do that you could not do?" demanded Marietta.

"Get up and get breakfast," said Mrs. Kellinger, with another laugh.

Marietta said her sister's laugh had come back with her lost color; she was subdued, but that was becoming.

"There is no hurry about that. In winter Sam brings in coal and wood; the housekeeper here need not have such a very hard time," remarked the housekeeper.

"Marietta!" dropping the blackberry out of her up-lifted spoon, "what are you trying to make plain to me?"

"That is what puzzles me, mamma," said Bel.

"It has been made plain to me, that it is time for me to move on. How many years have I

been here? I was reckoning them up in the night. I came the year after you were married. I came to visit, and I have visited to my heart's content. I never could stay where another could stay, and do as well. I must move on to another neglected spot. This kitchen is the place for *you*. And then you would have no board to pay!"

"Marietta, you are a genius! But where would you go?"

"Where the way is opened!" said Marietta, briskly. "I did not know the way was opened here when I came. I have five hundred dollars in the bank. Perhaps I shall take a vacation," she added, with a happy laugh. It would be her first vacation for many years. She said she had vacation days as she went along.

"I should think you *would* be glad to go," said Bel, sympathetically. "I would fly away if I could."

"And leave me!" cried her mother, in pretended alarm.

"No, mamma, darling; not even to fly over the sea to France."

"But, Marietta, are you in solemn earnest?" questioned Marietta's sister, still unmindful of her blackberry.

"I have been in solemn earnest for two months. That is why I have coaxed you into the kitchen."

"Oh, I don't mind the kitchen. I like the change of it, and I am glad to save the money."

"What don't you like, then?"

"Missing you! And having the disgrace of you working somewhere!"

"I must work somewhere. I must go where I can be somebody, don't you see? I am not of any consequence in this house."

"Then I would become somebody here," said Mrs. Kellinger.

"And Bel is a most important somebody now," said Aunt Marie. "The greatest somebody of us all."

Bel brightened. Why, so she was! To grandpapa! But not to anybody else.

To whom else did she wish to be somebody?

It was a foolish question to ask, because she knew the answer; she had learned the answer by heart all these Saturday mornings when she and Mr. Perez had read French together in the sitting-room, with grandpapa looking on and listening, or on the piazza, both of them near grandpapa's chair, often with their heads bent over the same book; when either of them laughed or their tones

became more animated, the teacher would bid her pupil translate, and then the old man would become interested; in this way Mr. Devoe had learned the contents of several French books, and had been forced to acknowledge that the foreigners had common sense on their side. He was delighted with Pascal; and often asked for one of his "Thoughts" to be read again and again.

Isobel went up to her chamber that Saturday night with the door of her own heart opened so wide to her clear-eyed vision that she beheld with confusion and shamefacedness the one enthroned within it; the one to whom she gave impassioned, girlish homage, the one she "belonged to," in right of it, more than she belonged to grandpapa. He was not lifted above other men like Prosper Dekker, he was as natural as she was; she saw his faults as she saw her own, but she loved his weaknesses, and she hated her own; she gave his weaknesses their own hard names; jealousy, a quick suspicion of evil in others, a grasping of good things for himself, an unrelenting spirit to one who wronged him; this was all true and apparent every day of his life; but he was so much beside; so refined in every word and motion with a grace and courtesy of manner that won you without the aid of his

bright, varied and easy conversation. Mr. Prosper had said that he was pure-hearted and pure-minded, and as faithful as the sun. "You may count on Perez, he's always there." He had never failed her, in every thing he had been beyond her expectations; his faults had never given her one unpleasant touch; he was the other and stronger side of herself; where he was weak, she was weaker.

Did any one know? Had any one seen? She avoided the speaking of his name now-a-days, it did not come easily; to herself she said, "Perez," and there was no word in French or English like it. He was all the more to her because at first he had been so little; her dislike had gradually worn away and then slowly came the appreciation of his best self; and now the surprise and delight of finding that he was not only some one to admire afar off, but to love near by; she was so happy that it *hurt*.

After the month away—(and what would she do in that month?) he would have a month at home, with her, not for walks or drives, because grand-papa could not spare her, but for talks, and books, and music; and while he was away she would write every day in the handsome blank book he

had given her, with its title in his penmanship on the fly leaf: "Natural History of Half an Acre." It was his fun that grandpapa allowed her half an acre of liberty. He told her that Ruskin would fill that book a dozen times out of her half acre. The first date was in January. The pages would have continued very blank but for an occasional hint from Mr. Perez or grandfather.

That evening she had read it aloud to grandfather. She took it up again after she went upstairs, to look through it; it was like the touch of Perez Dekker's hand. It was very childishly put; Perez had smiled over it.

"Squirrels rob bee-hives, and do not save the honey for winter. They do not learn to be wise.

"The witch-hazel has yellow blossoms and is not afraid of the cold and snow.

"Grandpapa says people in old times used bent twigs of witch-hazel to find lost things; but had to have a 'gift' to find them. He had not the gift; he says he had the gift of not losing his things.

"Mr. Perez found a star chick-weed for me. The wind swept the fallen, dead leaves away, and he found it.

"Sam Watts found a catkin for me; it was yellow. Because I liked it Mr. Perez brought me

some with some roses. Grandpapa found a dandelion in bloom, once in the winter, but only once; and a long time ago.

“Mr. Prosper came to go skating with Mr. Perez, by moonlight, but they did not bring me any Natural History; they saw a rabbit. Mamma went because she knows how to skate; and Miss Jue went for fun.

“Mr. Perez says the crows know when the ice will bear them. I wish the ice would bear me. I would like to be a bird, even a crow, if I might go on the ice. But grandpapa is afraid; he says he is sure I would get lost if I went away from my half acre. He has seen cedar birds in winter. I wish they would come here.

“There is a river six miles away, and I see it from the hill; or I did see it one afternoon, when grandpapa was asleep and mamma and Mr. Prosper took me to the hill.

“The February sun rises more to the east. If it were not for the sun-risings I should forget where the east is. Grandpapa says he has seen the sun rise for half a century, and the sun would miss him if he were not looking out.

“Mr. Perez brought me blood-root to-day; it has a single white flower. I put it in a glass of water,

but he took it out, and put it in my hair. (I wear my hair 'up' now, except in the mornings. Mr. Perez said I might put this in, for it belonged to the Natural History of Girls.)

"Nest-building is going busily on. I found two at the foot of the garden, and Mr. Perez told me about others. Grandpapa likes to hear about Natural History. Grandpapa says birds sometimes quarrel in nest-building time; and it has happened that a bird has left its mate. I thought birds were always loving.

"Mr. Perez put a small bit of mirror near a nest where the birds could see the reflection of themselves. Grandpapa said he was tempted to go out and see what they would do. The sparrows were afraid and did not try to fight the intruders off.

"Mr. Perez brought me to-day a splendid book about birds to read to grandpapa. Grandpapa's name was written in it.

"Mr. Perez knows somebody who knows about a garden planted over one hundred years ago, and in which nothing has been done for many years; there is a fence and a hedge, and the posts are locusts. I must remember that locust wood is durable.

"Mr. Perez says this is not about my own half

acre. He says I must write *fauna* and *flora*; and every day, I *must* find something in my own sky, and earth, and water. (The water is the tiniest pool, where the chickens come to drink.)

"I found wild strawberries to-day, and grandpapa had them with cream and sugar.

"Mr. Perez brought me a *load* of ferns; a whole armful; I never saw such tall ones. We put them in the fire-place. (Grandpapa has a stove in his room, so the stove is taken down in the sitting-room. This is a Natural History of Grandpapas.)

"Grandpapa has a toad. It lives near the shed door. He let me follow it yesterday, and I followed it to some tall weeds. Every night he says it goes to some damp place. I was awake last night, for grandpapa was restless and wanted to talk about 'old times,' and we heard the toads sing till past midnight.

"Mr. Perez has told me about Thoreau; he says he never killed one living thing to study it.

(Mr. Perez laughed and said: "Did he kill one dead thing?")

With a happy laugh she shut the book. She would write every day while he was gone, to surprise him!

Was it deceitful not to read it *all* to grandpapa?

She had written "Mr. Perez" so often; so foolishly often.

But Mr. Perez *did* bring the specimens, and must she not be a faithful chronicler and give her authority?

Mr. Perez read everything; he opened even a new book with the air of one who knew all about it. Did he despise her because she knew so little? Would he love somebody wise? He said a girl he knew, had read the Gospel of John in Greek; and another had gone to Italy to study painting; and still another was going to Italy, to perfect herself in music; and all *she* knew was French, and how to take care of grandpapa.

"Wise men often choose silly wives," Miss Jue had told her that day; and she was ashamed of herself, because she was so glad to believe it true, and because she liked Miss Jue for saying it.

The next day Mr. Prosper Dekker preached for a friend in the church that Mrs. Kellinger and her sister attended. Marietta drove her sister in the old-fashioned chaise; Bel stood at the gate and watched them as they drove away; she stood long enough to catch a glimpse of the waiting party on the piazza opposite. A week ago she would have stayed for the bow and the lighted eyes that would

greet her, as Mr. Perez's carriage passed through the entrance; but she hurried in this morning, conscious and ashamed, before Miss Jue had been assisted to the back seat. Mr. Perez sat in front alone. She watched through the vine-shaded end of the piazza; he was watching also, and she went in more ashamed and conscious than before.

"Did you want to hear Prosper Dekker preach, Bel Hope?" grandfather inquired.

"Yes, grandpapa."

"He will come in and preach to us to-night."

"It is not like—it is not church."

"I have never been to church—not often—and I have lived through it; I guess you will."

"Why did you not go?"

"Because—oh, I had enough to do at home; I never let a Sabbath day pass without reading my Bible."

Isobel hesitated; would she dare say it now, when he was too old and ill to go to church?"

"Speak out. What are you thinking?"

"Only something Mr. Prosper said—"

"About going to church? He believes in it; it is his business."

"More than mine?" she insisted.

"Yes, he goes to preach."

“He does not go to preach to empty seats.”

“No, and he never will. He may be sharp, and speak truth, but he will never be a great preacher.”

“He does not think about that.”

“How do *you* know, chick?”

“Because he thinks only of what he has to say. Mr. Perez says his power lies in forgetting himself; he throws himself into the truth.”

“The truth?” questioned the old man, testily; “now tell me what you were thinking.”

She did not speak at once; she had forgotten his very words.

“I heard him say to Mr. Perez that he would want a friend some day, in the judgment day, when all his life would be revealed, and that there was but one way to get the only Friend that would do him any good.”

“What way is that?”

“He read it to him; shall I read it to you?”

“Yes, I don’t care.”

She had slipped her French Testament into her pocket, hoping to go out under the trees and find her sermon; it was a long time before she found the words; she had no idea whether they were written in Matthew or in Revelation.

Before she could finish the words he took them up and repeated them ; he had learned them when he was ten years old.

“ Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in Heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in Heaven.”

With both arms about his neck and pressing her head against his breast, she said : “ Grandpapa, I want *you* to have some one on your side when that day comes.”

XXI.

DISCONTENTED.

THAT same Sunday afternoon, while Bel was reading the Bible to her grandfather (he has asked her to begin the first Gospel) her mother was sitting in a rustic chair at the foot of the lawn with several religious papers in her lap; Miss Jue had sent them over by Anastasia; Miss Jue was fond of the religious weeklies.

Mrs. Kellinger was not reading, however; she was thinking of the morning's sermon; the text was the words Isobel had found for her grandfather.

The latch of the gate clicked, she nervously seized the topmost paper and unfolded it; was Prosper Dekker coming because she had resolved to think of anything and everything rather than of him? Must her quiet be disturbed? Her life was flowing on smoothly; she was seeking to forget the reckless excitement of her twenty years of

married life, "married misery," she had said to Marietta, and to be Marietta's good sister and Bel's good mother; this young man, so many years younger, was dangerous to her peace of mind; she could not love his life and his influence over herself, without being drawn to him and loving *him*! It was not in her nature, even at her two-score years of age; was the Lord he served, displeased to have it so? Was the Lord she was trying with all her heart to serve, displeased to have it so?

He was in the world, and in the world she was in herself; and with this young man she was thrown into familiar companionship; she was Bel's mother, she was John Kellinger's widow; she would break away from this folly—but how weak she was! All the weaker because his help was brought to the great need of her weaker self. Did not human hearts ever grow old? Oh, that her hair were white and her heart shut up to holy influences; oh, that her *natural* self were utterly destroyed! Why must he come and talk to her? Did she seem so old to him that he need not fear making her care, as a girl of twenty might naturally and righteously care?

"Mrs. Kellinger!"

She lifted her eyes slowly. "You are not well," he said, hastily, and with startled solicitude.

"Yes, I am; I am only wicked; and it is time I was used to that."

"What is troubling you this afternoon?"

Like a boy he threw himself down upon the grass; how boyish he was in many things! He was two or three years younger than his cousin Perez.

"I was wishing," rubbing her forehead with her fingers, "that there was a place for me. If my husband had lived, and I had been changed to love him better, I should like to have been a good wife to him. I have lost something because he has not lived."

Her listener seemed to have nothing to say.

"St. Paul found something for widows to do," he replied, after a silence, during which she had read three endless paragraphs.

"Did he? Can you tell me?" with quick impatience.

"I would rather you would read it yourself."

"Very likely I should not understand."

"He wrote to Timothy about them. Timothy was young and needed Paul's common sense and

spirituality to teach him. He wrote to Timothy how women should array themselves."

"Did he? Are women told *that* in the Bible? I have read the Gospels."

"He bids them dress in modest apparel."

"As modest as mine?" she said, looking down at her black dress and speaking seriously.

"He was speaking to the women who were 'professing godliness.'"

"And like Timothy, you come and tell me what Paul said."

"He bade Timothy rebuke the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters."

"Might he not marry? Did Paul forbid that?"

"I think he preferred that Timothy should be as himself, so wholly given up to the work in which he gloried that his heart could not open to earthly relationships."

"That was hard," with slightest sarcasm.

"Not for Paul, and perhaps not for young Timothy; the younger women were to be to him as sisters."

Mrs. Kellinger's motion tore the edge of the paper in her hand.

"There was a kind of ecclesiastical order of wid-

owhood, and none might be enrolled less than sixty years of age."

"What about those who were nearer forty?" with an uncomfortable laugh.

"Forty was the age fixed at the Council of Chalcedon for an order of deaconesses; they were a band of widows set apart for the service of the Church. Dorcas is supposed to be one. Do you know about Dorcas?"

"My mother used to belong to a sewing society called a Dorcas Society," in an amused tone.

"You will read about Dorcas in Acts. I would read Acts, if I were you."

"What did Dorcas do?"

"What the younger widows can do now. She may not have had children to train, and so she gave herself to the Church."

"I do not wish to become a nun," with a sharp and hurt inflection.

"Dorcas was not a nun; she was not shut up in a cloister, she was out in the world among the women and children who needed womanly ministrations."

"But I am not fitted for anything."

"You are very teachable."

"Am I? I thought I was not."

"You have work here—you might have, if you could relieve Miss Bel."

"With her grandfather! He will not have me when Bel is within calling distance. He has not forgiven me—and I should not think he would. He wonders that I can be content with my quiet life here."

"I wonder somewhat, also."

"Bel is here, that is one reason; and I hate my vanity and lightness, that is another, and I have nowhere else to go, which may be more to the purpose. My mourning is sorrow for my self more than regret for my husband—that sounds heartless, but it is too true. Bel knows it; we did not either of us love him."

"I am very sorry for you."

"I would rather you would tell me what to do," she returned, impatiently.

"Study what Paul says."

"I cannot understand the Bible alone."

"As the Ethiopian said: 'How can I, unless some man guide me?'"

"Some women find plenty to do," she said, discontentedly.

"Your sister, for example."

"She is looking for something new; she wants me to take her place here."

"The best thing you can do," he replied, heartily. "I think Paul would approve that. He encouraged women to be 'keepers at home.'"

"Then you don't believe in Women's Rights?"

"Her best right is to be at home and to help women to make happy homes. Women had a great deal to do in Paul's life: I suspect he had a good time in Lydia's house."

She curled the edges of the paper; he looked up at her and smiled.

"I would like to know about the women Paul knew: Tryphena and Tryphosa, and Phebe and Persis and Julia, the sister of Nereus, and Priscilla, and the beloved Persis and the mother of Rufus."

"They were not women like me; they were holy," in her childish tone of humility.

"Do you mean that they had never sinned?"

"I do not believe they had been as vain and selfish as I am now—and I have been worse than I am now."

"Do you mean that a woman as sinful as you has never been forgiven?"

"No; I know better. But Paul never would have spoken of me."

"I hope he would; I hope you would have taken him into your house—as you do me."

"I should have been afraid; I am afraid of good people. Mr. Dekker, you seem to find everything in the Bible."

"O no; I haven't found out if Paul wore spectacles, like me."

"People didn't wear spectacles in those days."

"Then you have discovered something about him that isn't in the Bible."

"I am discontented and wilful to-day; I am neither old nor young; I have lost the past and have not found any future."

"What about the present? That is enough for anybody that has but one heart and one mind and one soul."

"I told you about the present; I am discontented."

"I should be sorry if you were satisfied."

"With myself?"

"With your life! It is not enough that a woman makes herself look pretty, and that she is always agreeable, and that she find employment for her fingers; her heart should be large enough to feel with the large movements of the world, and her intellect should take in the new things in

science, and her soul should live in an atmosphere of ever-growing spirituality."

"Oh, dear me!" cried Mrs. Kellinger, comically, "how many women do you know like that?"

"I know the beginning of more than one."

"Girls in schools and professional women."

"That is the kind of woman Perez is making of your daughter."

"Bel! Nonsense!"

"Do you not see that she grows?"

"Sweeter every day, yes."

"And you do not notice the five cities and the natural history?" he said, smilingly.

"I know Rome is the city now; and she learns something every day."

"She is a real student," he returned, smiling at some recollection of her.

"I could not be a student."

"I do not know that Dorcas was, or Julia, or Persis—except students of the finest literature in the world."

Gathering the papers that were slipping from her lap, she arose; he immediately sprang up.

"Must you go in? Then I must go; thank you for listening to me."

"Did Timothy do nothing beside 'rebuke?'" she asked, stooping to pick up a fallen paper.

"Timothy had a great deal to do besides," he answered, seriously.

"I find Paul's letters to him an endless study; I read them as if written to me."

"But these times are so different," she urged.

"Not in essentials; there is the same work to do, and it must be done in the same spirit. Paul warns Timothy, his 'own son in the faith,' not to let any man despise his youth."

"Mr. Dekker, how old *are* you?"

She was moving at his side towards the house.

"Younger than I appear; I always seemed more mature than I had a natural right to be. I have made haste fast, while Prosper, wise boy, has made haste slowly. I am twenty-eight."

Her attention was given to the papers again; "the elder women as mothers," had he not said so? She was fourteen years his senior in years; in sad and worldly experience, how many more?

"And despite his youth," Prosper continued, "Paul told him to be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity; and to give attendance to reading, to ex-

hortation, to doctrine; not only to meditate, but to *give himself wholly* to them."

"The Church needed that then?" she said, jealously.

"And not now? I fear you do not study the state of the Church; she needs a thousand Timothys to-day." Bel's white dress had appeared in the doorway; she beckoned to her mother's companion as he lifted his hat to her, and then turned into the path that led to the gate.

"Grandpapa is nervous to-day; it is one of his hard days. I think, if you have time—"

"Would he care to see me? I'll gladly sit with him awhile."

XXII.

GRANDFATHER'S DIFFICULTIES.

THE old man's hand was cordially extended as the young preacher entered with Bel; like Mrs. Kellinger, he felt "safe" with Prosper Dekker.

Mrs. Kellinger and her bundle of papers passed up the stairway; she dropped the papers upon the bed and sank down upon the carpet, burying her face in her hands at the bedside.

Would God be on *her* side if she prayed to him? Would he make her young again; give her youth and its opportunities back to her? Was there something to do in her widowhood; the saddest, most desolate widowhood of all widowhoods, for there was no married happiness to soften and brighten it.

Down-stairs, Prosper Dekker, who did not guess (or did he?) the hold he had taken upon her sympathetic, impulsive nature, was sitting beside the old man's chair, clasping one of the veined, limp hands in his own.

Bel would have taken her book and gone away, but grandfather detained her by a look; she was very shyly glad; for would not this be something like sitting in church and listening?

"Mr. Dekker, I have my difficulties," grandfather impressively began.

"The Hill Difficulty is a place we all have to climb," said the young man.

"Sometimes I think I am like a heathen, only worse; I have been within sound of the Gospel bell all my days, and have not gone to church. I wonder what *their* difficulties are?"

"I think I can tell you something about a Mongol's difficulties; I have recently become interested in that part of the world."

Bel remembered the story of the old Abbé. Mr. Dekker was interested in every part of the world.

"The Mongols live—where?" asked the old man. "I used to know. Asia?"

"Siberia is on the north of them and China on the south; they are a people with a great many thoughts."

"That is like me," nodded grandfather. "I have time for thoughts, too many of them. If it were not for Bel Hope here, I should die with thinking."

Bel Hope laughed; she had not known that to keep him from thinking was a part of her mission.

"One of the Mongol's greatest difficulties is that he feels the Gospel to be superfluous; you are to tell me when you are like a Mongol, you know."

"I used to think so, when I prided myself upon being a moral man; somehow I don't feel as moral as I did. I'm afraid that plank will slip from under in the Judgment Day."

"Then you are *not* like a Mongol."

"What plank is under him—something better than doing his duty to his neighbor and living a good life himself?"

"Buddhism is his plank; it has Scriptures and miracles, and crowds of followers, devout believers, who live and die in their belief."

"Then I should think it would be hard to move him."

"Another difficulty is the fewness of our religious books, compared to the multitude of their own; they say they do not know how many books they have. One of their sacred collections contains a hundred volumes.

"One Bible is enough for me," said grandfather. "I have read it all my life, and don't begin to know half of it."

"The idea of the Trinity is another thing that puzzles our Mongol heathen."

"I leave that alone."

"He is so accustomed to hard truths in his own religion that he is willing to lay this aside as one of the things too deep for him to understand."

"That's the way I do; that is the kind of Mongol I am."

"One of the questions often asked is: 'If it is only Jesus who can save men, are all lost who died before he came into the world?'"

"I know about that," said the old man, quickly. "I know Abraham saw his day and rejoiced to see it."

Bel was watching both faces as she listened; her grandfather's eyes were gleaming with delighted surprise; it was new to be met in this way; it gave him something fresh to think about.

"Their own system teaches that a man must suffer for his own sin, and that he cannot escape punishment; but when clearly explained, he does not object to vicarious suffering. A Mongol cannot understand how a man's body can live again."

"I do not understand *how*," said grandfather, "but I believe it will. I have got to go back to childhood, Mr. Dekker. I'm too old and flighty

and absent-minded to reason about these things; I've got to take them like Bel Hope. She doesn't know how not to believe; she takes the Bible as she reads it and never contradicts anything. She doesn't have difficulties."

"I cannot see that you have," replied Mr. Dekker, smiling.

"I thought I had; I think when I bring them to the light they are like ghosts and fade away."

"The Mongols generally believe that they are sinners; they believe also that guilt must be cancelled."

"It has been hard for me to think myself a great sinner; I've dug and delved on this little farm all my life. I've never been fifty miles away from it. I wasn't a bad husband as husbands go, and I was always good to Bel Hope's mother, excepting perhaps that I wouldn't let her have her fling like other girls; but she took it for all that. I had to get my place mortgaged because I went security for a man I liked, but I've paid the interest regular, and nobody will lose nothing by me. I've done lots of kindnesses for ungrateful folks, and never kept back a cent of a man's wages. I never was profane, and I never had no taste for liquor, and I've read good books

when I have read any. I haven't been to church, and *that's* a bad record."

"Our Mongol reasons something in that style; he believes that at death his good actions are balanced against his bad; if the good actions weigh the heavier, he has his reward, if the bad ones bring the scale down, he must be proportionately punished. He says his prayers—"

"I confess I have never prayed much beside the Lord's Prayer, night and morning—"

"And he goes on long pilgrimages to famous temples, and when the Christian missionary tells him that all this does not count, he is shocked, and more shocked still when he is told that a man can do absolutely *nothing* to merit pardon; that his good life counts for nothing, that the thief and the murderer have as good a claim to Heaven as he. Now is the time for him to be offended and not stay to learn more of what Christ requires of his followers."

Bel was watching her grandfather, uneasily; would *he* be offended? Was he like a Mongol in this?

"Our Mongol has to learn, be he old and filled with his own good works, or old and a great sinner in his own eyes, that it is not merely the can-

celling of past sins, but that his heart must be made pure from the love of sin itself; this is enough to discourage him, for he has been taught that he must do everything for himself, and how can himself eradicate the love of sin, the tendency to sin? The heart Christ dwells in must be a pure heart; made pure by Christ's own blood; not kept pure by the man's own goodness, or made pure by his own obedience."

Grandfather drew his hand away from the hand that held it; muttered words were upon his lips; he moved uncomfortably and asked Bel sharply to bring him a glass of water.

"Sometimes a Mongol asks if believing in God and obeying his laws will not be sufficient, and then he is told that no man can come to the Father, excepting by his Son Jesus Christ."

Grandfather drained the goblet and returned it to his handmaiden.

"I suppose they like to argue," he said, "the same as other folks."

"Yes, and they are quick to detect a weak link in their opponent's chain; a missionary told me that he prayed continually for his answers to be given him while debating with the Buddhist priests."

"Did you say their sins are the same as ours?"

“The Mongol has his Decalogue; a list of ten black sins; they are divided into three classes; the sins of the body, the tongue, and the mind. There are four sins of the tongue: the false word, the harsh word, the slanderous word, the idle word.”

Bel was making mental note of the sins of the tongue

“The Mongol believes most devoutly in prayer.”

“I have never thought much about prayer,” confessed grandfather, “but I would feel uneasy if I went to sleep and forgot to say my prayers; last night I was asleep before I knew it, and I said it quick enough when I woke up the first time, and felt that I had missed something.”

“Many of his prayers are simple repetitions; he uses them as charms. Dear old friend, may I ask if the prayers you have prayed all these nights has been answered yet?”

“The Lord's Prayer!” I never thought about its being answered; how could it be?”

“You have had your daily bread?”

“And I worked for it; got it by the sweat of my brow.”

“And your sins have been forgiven, even as you forgave those who sinned against you!”

“Young man, I haven't forgiven this girl's father

yet, and I can't see that I ever will. I have another grudge against him for not being a good father to *her*; not alone my daughter, but my granddaughter! I'd like to fight it out with him if we were both young and strong."

"Oh, grandpapa, dear!" exclaimed Bel. "Poor papa!"

"I've said too much," sighed the old man. "I always do. I never like to speak of him. Run away, Bel Hope, go out in the yard. Marietta will let you feed the chickens to-night."

Bel was glad to "run away." How could grandpapa help seeing that he was like a Mongol? He would soon be angry with Mr. Prosper and bid him stop talking. Not choosing to ask Aunt Marie to let her feed the chickens, she followed the path to the gate, and even used the freedom to unlatch it and go down the steps into the road. Up the straight road were houses on both sides, houses she had never entered; all the girls in the neighborhood had called upon her; she would have been glad to know what their homes were like; they were bright girls, not as pretty as Janet, and not chatterboxes like Ellinor, not fascinating like the picture she had seen of Mr. Prosper's "Annie;" but they were *girls*, and she was lonely for girls,

and the fun and work and looking forward that these girls must have among themselves. Miss Jue did not admire them, but she never admired any one, and Mr. Perez hardly knew their names; but Aunt Marie loved them all, and not a day passed that one of the girls or one of their mothers did not come to talk to her; to tell her some good, or some sad news.

"Bel Hope doesn't want to know these girls, Marietta," grandfather had growled at her one day, when she came to the sitting-room door and asked her to come out and see Mary Hyde and her fancy work; she did long to see that fancy work.

She had not thought to put on her broad hat; she must not go far with her uncovered head; she was beyond her half acre already; a carriage driving toward her frightened her back to the house. The girls of the neighborhood played croquet bareheaded, and Mary Hyde's red head might be seen many times a day inside her garden fence; but Bel hastened back with the sun shining on her braided hair and was in time not to keep grandfather waiting for his five o'clock cup of tea.

"*He's* plain enough to talk to the heathen," he said, when she appeared before him, with his cup

of tea, "and I rather think he thought he *was* talking to an old heathen."

"Grandpapa, you are not a Mongol," she laughed, merrily.

"It might be better for me if I was," he grumbled.

Mrs. Kellinger entered with a slow, soft tread.

"Mamma, where have you been?" exclaimed Bel.

"Scolding myself," she answered, smiling. "Bel, I wish you would find me something to do."

"Mamma, you are always busy," Bel remonstrated.

XXIII.

OVER THE WAY.

“THAT old man over the way is a puzzle to me,” remarked Prosper Dekker, that same Sunday evening.

The cousins were sitting together on the piazza. Miss Jue and her book were within the open window; Miss Jue kept an unopened book about her on Sundays; her brother said it gave her a literary air and she did not have the bother of reading; her Bible she read in the silence of her own chamber; it seemed rather wicked to her to have the Bible about among common things, as Prosper did.

When a child she had been allowed to read no book upon the Sabbath excepting the Bible; in those uneasy days she had compromised by reading the stories of the Apocrypha; it was the Bible and yet not the Bible; how she had laughed over them. As long as she lived she would have a queer feeling about Sunday evenings; her father

had religiously begun his Sabbath with the setting sun of Saturday and allowed nothing beside Sunday work and Sunday conversation to hallow the dawn of his Sabbath; her mother had as religiously observed Sunday evenings as the close of her Sabbath, and allowed nothing of a week day nature to interfere with its sanctity. Two Sabbath evenings every week had not been enjoyed by the restless little Jue; if only she might have chosen either her father's or her mother's evening, and had one for play! Her mother usually knit upon her father's evening, and her father employed himself upon some light labor in her mother's evening; but Jue was kept at her father's side upon Saturday evening, learning the catechism, and at her mother's side Sunday evening, reading aloud to her from the Bible.

"How is he a puzzle to you?" asked Miss Jue.

"He says he has read the Bible through a dozen times (and that counts up among his good works) and yet the vail is upon his heart as upon the Jews; the Saviour of sinners has not come into the world for him."

"I don't know why not," said Miss Jue.

Religious conversation upon Sunday did not

cause her uneasiness ; it seemed a fitting time for it ; as fitting as washtubs on Monday morning.

“ They are all a puzzle to me over there,” she replied ; “ that widow looking too pretty in her widow’s cap, and that girl waiting on her grandfather and yet getting in a fume over it every once in a while. Marietta is sensible ; she keeps about her business.”

“ They are as natural as Eve after she learned to sin,” said Prosper ; “ none of them keep their naughty ways to themselves.”

“ I believe you like them all the better for it,” said sharp Miss Jue ; “ that widow is artful, with all her artlessness.”

“ In what does her art consist ?” asked Prosper, much amused.

“ In arousing sympathy ; I don’t see why she is to be pitied more than any one else. She has money enough to live on, and her husband was no comfort to her.”

“ O, cousin Jue ! What a view to take of her life !”

“ Life has its bread and butter side, if *you* don’t see it,” she retorted, “ and she knows which side her bread is buttered on.”

“ O, woman !” cried Perez, “ how uncharitable thou canst be to each other.”

"O, man, how thou canst never see a fault in a woman if she has a pretty face," was the retort in quick bitterness.

"Now you are uncharitable to us," answered Prosper. "I see all her faults; they are all on the surface; she has not the art to conceal them."

"That is the artfulness of artlessness, then! Who loves me the better for my faults?"

Alas, who did? Neither of her auditors, surely.

"I didn't know you acknowledged any," said Perez, teasingly.

"I say, Perez," said Prosper, "the first love story in the Bible has a point. God did not *hurt* Adam when he made Eve for him: he brought her to him, made out of himself, while he was asleep; one point of that sleep is, that Adam had no care about it; all he had to do was to awake and find her. Which reminds me of some stanzas I wrote in my college days—"

"Please, don't," begged Perez.

"I didn't intend to. I'll save them for Mrs. Isobel."

"You will be calling her Isobel next," interjected Miss Jue.

"That is but one remove from it."

"She is old enough to be your mother."

“Hardly,” in a constrained tone.

No one exceeded Miss Jue in introducing unpleasant topics.

“How that old man lives on,” observed Perez.

“People that bother you don’t die right away—outside of books,” replied Miss Jue. “They live to keep on bothering you.”

“I want him to live until he reads the Bible through again,” said Prosper.

“Isobel is doing that now for him,” said Perez. “What a change over there his death will make.”

“Most of all to him,” said Prosper, half to himself.

“He has found this world a comfortable enough place,” remarked Miss Jue.

“Paul said that to stay on earth was to have Christ with him, and yet he thought it far better to go away and be with Christ.”

Again Prosper spoke as if speaking to himself.

Miss Jue supposed it to be one of his Sunday meditations; but there was one thing about Prosper, he was as “devoted” week days as on Sundays; she almost wondered how he knew when Sunday came. His “disappointment” had certainly made him more of a saint than ever; the queer part of it was that his saintliness, instead of

separating him from Perez (who was as different as day from night) was bringing them nearer together. Somehow Perez always understood him.

"Were you with the old man this afternoon?"

Miss Jue detected a hint of jealousy in her brother's voice; she was an excellent detective.

"Part of the time. He had a pain somewhere, and asked for a mustard plaster about the size of a dollar—that was not to-day, however, and I wish you could have seen Bel's eyes when she asked if it were a gold dollar, a silver dollar, or a dollar bill."

"She pokes plenty of fun at him," said Perez; "did he snub you this afternoon?"

"No; he seemed glad to listen to some plain truths."

"You do not speak any other kind," snapped Miss Jue.

"I do not know any other kind."

Old Malt was purring at his mistress' side; he gave a leap into her lap, sure of his welcome.

"How does a man feel to believe a thing all his life, and then to be forced to acknowledge it false!"

Perez's exclamation was not in the way of a question.

"He feels that he has been a fool," was Miss Jue's reply.

"In the year 1806," said Prosper, "the French Institute enumerated eighty geological theories which were hostile to the Scriptures; not one of them is held to-day."

"They believed too quick," answered Miss Jue.

"They would not have made themselves such fools if they had held to the good old Scripture record," said Perez.

"Don't talk to me about geology in the Bible," said Miss Jue, making a motion as if to push the geology away with her hands.

"I was thunder-struck yesterday," said Perez, with the feeling in his voice, "when I read that old Job speaks of an empty place in the north of the heavens: 'he stretcheth out the north over the empty place,' and now the astronomers tell us that the only place in the stellar heavens where no stars can be discovered is the *north*. When I learned it and believed it, I accepted the Bible as I had never done before; no argument has ever moved me like that. Because of it I was all the more ready to believe your truth this morning."

"That fact is new to me. I am glad to know it."

"I don't see what difference it makes," rebelled Miss Jue.

"Do you know, cousin Jue," Prosper turned toward her and laid his hand on the window sill, "how wise the wisdom of the Egyptians was? Plato tells us that the wise old fellows taught that the heavens originated out of a kind of pulp, and that men were generated from the slime of the Nile."

"What has that to do with Job?"

"How did Job know about the empty place in the north?"

"By inspiration, of course."

"His telescope had not swept the sky," added Perez.

"Speaking of telescopes, cousin Jue, there are telescopes of such penetrating power that, looking through them, you can read in a clear atmosphere ordinary print at the distance of twenty miles."

"H'm," muttered Miss Jue. "I'd like to try."

"Perez, if life were not so interesting on this side of the water, I believe I would take a trip across!" exclaimed Prosper, with something new in his tone.

"So would I. But that's just it. I like life better on this side. I do not object to the rest either."

Miss Jue pushed Malt out of her lap and arose,

speaking in a sudden tone: "Prosper, where is Annie Pierrepont?"

"At Nantucket."

"When did you see her last?"

"In Florence. How long ago was that?" he answered, easily.

"Is she married?" persisted his questioner.

"Not yet."

"Engaged?"

"Possibly. There is a handsome young fellow hanging around Nantucket, her father told me."

"I used to think—but she is such a child! Prosper, I believe you are above such earthly things."

"I am sorry your belief has so poor a foundation," he returned, lightly.

As Miss Jue pushed Malt off, and moved away, Perez said: "Does Bel remind you of her?"

Miss Jue would again have detected something in the tone.

"I had not thought of it."

"Old fellow, you hit me pretty sharp this morning."

"As I intended to," said Prosper, laying his hand upon his cousin's head and drawing it backward.

"Prosper," in a peculiarly moved tone, "you do

not need to preach to me; your life is more than all your words."

"Don't say that," was the pained reply, "I am weaker than water. I never felt it as I do to-night. Will you read to me awhile?"

"They went into the light, and while Perez read Prosper lay upon the sofa, following each thought with perfect appreciation. The book Perez chose was one Prosper had given to him.

"No man was ever more like you," Perez remarked, as he took it from the shelf.

Opening in the early chapters he read, as Prosper had told him, "as no other man reads that I know."

Bel said his reading was better than any music she had ever heard; Miss Jue acknowledged that it did not make her nervous.

"I remember, when a very, very young boy, going out shooting with my father, and praying as often as the dogs came to a point, that he might kill the bird. As he did not always do this, and as sometimes there would occur false points, my heart got bewildered. I believe I began to doubt sometimes the efficacy of a prayer, sometimes the lawfulness of field sports. Once too I recollect, when I was taken up with nine other boys at

school to be unjustly punished, I prayed to escape the shame. The master, previously to flogging all the others, said to me, to the great bewilderment of the whole school: 'Little boy, I excuse you; I have particular reasons for doing it;' and, in fact, I was never flogged during the three years I was at that school. That incident settled my mind for a long time; only I doubt whether it did me any good, for prayer became a charm. I fancied myself the favorite of the invisible. I knew that I carried about with me a talisman unknown to others, which would save me from all harm. It did not make me better; it simply gave me security, as the Jew felt safe in being the descendant of Abraham, or went into battle under the protection of the Ark, sinning no less all the time."

The other side of this boyish religion—the adoration of purity, he symbolized for himself in womanhood. Under this symbol he worshipped with a boy's unquestioning worship, his Idea. Like a boy too, he transferred to the Form all the excellence of the Idea.

As he grew up, he surrounded the conception of woman with all the sacredness of his highest religious aspirations, while his reverence for this conception tended in itself to exalt his desire for

holiness of life, and to keep him true to his ideal. In one of his lectures at Brighton, he says: "It is feelings such as these, call them romantic if you will, which I know, from personal experience, can keep a man all his youth through, before a higher faith has been called into being, from every species of vicious and low indulgence, in every shape and form.

* * * * * *

And now, at his entrance into manhood, both these ideas, which formed, as it were, his natural religion, became, and continued always to be, the foundations of his spiritual religion. He found them realized for him in Christ, the perfect Man. His writings teem with glowing descriptions of Christ as the great Vindicator of all wrong; of Christ in his contest with the spirit of the world, of opposition, of hypocrisy. To Christ also, as the spotless purity, he transferred his young belief in the entire stainlessness of womanhood; he saw in him not only perfect manhood, but perfect womanhood."

"I remember that," said the voice on the sofa.

"Your pencil mark is here. Here is something else about you. 'He took upon himself the office of a minister with the keenest sense of responsi-

bility, and the most perfect devotion of will. He desired to emulate the spirit of St. Paul. I was not present when he was ordained, but I heard from those who were, that his agitation was overpowering. When I saw him the day after, he looked as if he had been through an illness. He seemed quite shattered.' Here is something else for you. I believe I have marked the passages, and many there are, that remind me of you. You see, old fellow, I am reading you a lecture. I do not wish you to be *too* much like your ideal.

" 'His heart conquered easily, and in a moment, his philosophy!' And again: 'His affection sometimes vitiated his judgment, and he idealized his friends with a perfection which did not often belong to them. One result of this was that when a friend failed him, and his ideal fell from its pedestal, the shock almost broke his heart. Another, and the most important was, that the greatest change in his life and modes of thought were wrought in a large degree through the influence of his friends.' "

" You consider that a weakness? "

" Do you not? "

" A change in one's life or mode of thought should be wrought only by the truth. "

“And this is for you : ‘He saw his friends through his own atmosphere of love and truthfulness, and when, as sometimes happened, he was, against his will, convinced that what he saw was partially, at least, an air-built castle, the beauty of which was his own creation; the blow fell heavily and sorely on his heart.’”

“Are you warning me?” Prosper inquired, with some amusement, rising on his elbow.

“In general, yes.”

“You see no need of particular application?” in a tone greatly relieved, as he dropped back to the sofa pillow.

“Your secret consciousness must determine that,” was the light reply. “Now, will you have a bit out of another life, somebody whose college career was marked with ‘fun and fighting,’ whom you are not at all like—splendid old Guthrie.”

“That will do for to-night, thank you. I believe I must walk a mile for the sake of exercise.”

“And to get some Guthrie into you! Do you wish to go alone?”

“Thank you, yes.”

“And to get your next Sunday’s text. Are you engaged Sundays now?”

“Six Sundays ahead.”

“ Shall you ever settle down again ?”

“ When I have a special call.”

“ How do you get your texts ? I know you do not hunt the Corcordance through.”

“ Out of my heart and my life, and my battles with myself. I am sure to find words to fit.”

XXIV.

BEL'S EDUCATION.

BEL was two miles from home; grandfather had sent her with a note to Mr. Canfield; it was something about the mortgage, she knew; in her pocket was the reply carefully pinned in, for he had charged her to *pin* it into her pocket and not to let the grass grow under her feet in bringing it home. Sam had taken her in the hay rick, on his way to the meadows for a load of hay, and she had begged that she might walk home; it was so long since she had walked so far; she and Madame had thought nothing of walking to St. Adresse and back again.

She was up on the green bank among the blackberry bushes, when the sound of her own name startled her; who could be calling her so far away from home?

“Isobel, will you ride?”

Her mouth was stained with blackberries; she was ashamed to turn.

"Isobel! Isobel!"

"Oh, Mr. Perez," she cried, laughingly, "did you come after me because I was lost?"

His phaeton was close to the bank; with the reins in his hand he stood below her in the road.

"I came behind you, not after you; Prosper had a call to make and I told him he must walk home."

"So must I," she said, under her broad hat.

"Not if you go with me; come."

"I do not want to go home so soon; I have permission to be away long enough to walk."

"Then we will drive around; you have never seen Hanover."

Remonstrance was upon her lips, but he silenced her and assisted her into the phaeton.

"My new phaeton," he said; "I knew you would like to try it."

"Miss Jue said it was so nice," she returned.

"For two only. I would like to spend my vacation driving around in it—with you."

"You have been out every day—so far," she hurried to say.

"With Prosper, yes. I wish I could keep him here instead of going to the sea-shore. I think I shall send them away and stay myself."

"Mamma wishes to go."

"Would you like to drive?"

"O yes, thank you," she accepted, delightedly, "but I know nothing about it."

"I will teach you; you must not forget that your education is entrusted to me."

He laid the reins in her hand, and then leaned lazily back watching her as she sat upright; all he saw under her hat were the flushed cheek, and the pretty ear, half hidden by the waves of soft, shining hair. He had touched her hair once, and she had drawn away. Was this the girl who had talked to him in that sunshiny room in Havre? Her quaint surroundings gave her the air of a picture; now she was more like an everyday maiden, especially with the stains of blackberry upon her finger tips.

"How is your Natural History getting on?" he asked, teasingly.

The flush in her cheek deepened.

"When that is through I must give you a book for Science. What is Science?"

"Knowledge," she answered readily.

"First you must learn about the man in the moon."

"Mr. Prosper told Ellinor about the moon one day."

“What did he say?”

“He said the two eyes—but I have forgotten. Ellinor put it in her journal, but I had none.”

“The two eyes are said to be formed by two seas; the Sea of Showers and the Sea of Tranquillity; the Sea of Tranquillity is the darkest large tract on the surface of the moon; will you remember what the Man's eyes are made of?”

“Two seas. His eyes swim in tears all the time, then.”

“His nose is outlined by a range of mountains, but the nose itself is formed by seas; will you remember the names, if I repeat them to you?”

“Try and see,” she said, seriously, looking down at the reins.

“The Sea of Vapors—”

“The Sea of Vapors,” she repeated.

“The Bay of Tides and Mid-Moon Bay.”

Obediently she repeated the names of the bays.

“The mouth is rather wide and gaping—and no wonder; all he sees upon the earth is enough to astonish the old fellow—and is formed by the Sea of Clouds.”

In her interest she had forgotten the horse, and he had made his way to the grass by the roadside.

"O dear," she exclaimed: "how shall I get him back?"

Taking her hands into his own, he guided the reins and brought the horse back into the middle of the road.

"I thought Frisk knew better," she said.

"He feels that your hands are unskillful. Now tell me the names of the seas in the moon."

"The Sea of Clouds, the Sea of Vapors, the Mid-moon Bay, and, the sea of—Forgetfulness," she laughed.

"To punish you, I shall make you repeat each twice after me."

"It is fun," she said, "and not punishment."

"Then I will not tell you again; *that* will be punishment."

"Then I will ask Mr. Prosper," she said, saucily.

"And that would punish me. I would rather you should have your fun, than that I should have my punishment. Repeat as I say it, please. Watch my words. Say the Sea of Tranquillity, the Sea of Tranquillity, *but not the Sea of Clouds!* Repeat that, please."

With a merry light in her eyes and demure lips she repeated: "The Sea of Tranquillity! The Sea of Tranquillity."

"You witch," he said, laughing. "I have not caught you. You have heard it before."

"Grandpapa said last night, 'Marietta, say this after me: the Goose, the Goose, but not the Gander!' And she said: 'The Goose, the Goose, but not the Gander' as he said it, and he said: 'No, say the Goose! The Goose, *but not the Gander*;' and I caught it and said: 'The goose! the goose!' And I did not say, 'the gander' because he told me not to. And then I caught mamma, and Mary Hyde, and he laughed like a big boy. I love to make him laugh."

"I see I have not caught you."

"I would not like to be easily caught," she answered sedately.

"No, you are as shy as a yellow bird. But this is not your education; it is too trifling."

"Then teach me something else. I have learned something new to-day without your teaching, Mr. Perez Dekker. Old Mr. Canfield, you know him?"

"I know he exists."

"I saw him, and he asked me if I were from the land of Napoleon Bonaparte; and he said he saw him in England, when the—what is the name of the ship?"

"Bellerophon?"

"Yes, he saw him on the Bellerophon. When he comes to talk to grandpapa I do not like him; but I like him now, because he has seen the Emperor."

"Are you sure Napoleon Bonaparte ever lived?"

In her astonishment she dropped the reins and turned to look at him.

Frisk trotted contentedly on.

"Why are you sure? Don't forget your reins!"

She gathered the reins and sat mute.

"I must read to you my 'Historic Doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte.'"

"Doubts about what?" she asked, guiding Frisk into the middle of the road. Behind her on the cushion was a small volume she had not noticed; he found it and opened it.

"Prosper read to me as we drove along; this book is a great favorite of his. I have a mind to try it on you. May I read?"

"Please."

"Turn the first corner; we have plenty of time. You know French history, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes."

He read: "There was a certain man of Corsica whose name was Napoleon, and he was one of the chief captains of the host of the French; and he gathered together an army and went and fought

against Egypt; but when the king of Britain heard thereof, he sent ships of war and valiant men to fight against the French in Egypt. So they warred against them and prevailed, and strengthened the hands of the rulers of the land against the French, and drove away Napoleon from before the city of Acre. Then Napoleon left the captains and the army that were in Egypt, and fled, and returned back to France. So the French people took Napoleon and made him ruler over them, and he became exceeding great, inso-much that there was none like him of all that had ruled over France before."

"Is that a translation?" she asked, as he paused.

"No, it was written in English."

"What makes it sound so queer?"

"Does it? What does it sound like?"

"Not like a history of Napoleon."

"Do you mean that it is not true?"

"O no," she replied, puzzled.

"Shall I go on?"

"Yes, please. I must see what it means."

He read again: "And it came to pass after these things that Napoleon strengthened himself, and gathered together another host instead of that which he had lost, and went and warred against

the Prussians, and the Russians, and the Austrians, and all the rulers of the north country which were confederate against him. And the ruler of Sweden also, which was a Frenchman, warred against Napoleon. So they went forth and warred against the French in the plains of Leipsic. And the French were discomfited before their enemies, and fled, and came to the rivers which are behind Leipsic, and essayed to pass over, that they might escape out of the hands of their enemies; but they could not, for Napoleon had broken down the bridges; so the people of the north countries came upon them, and smote them with a very grievous slaughter."

The listener was still puzzled. "Why is it written like the Bible?"

"Is it?"

"It certainly is. It sounds like the parts of the Bible that grandpapa likes."

"Would he like this?"

"It would sound queer; not like 'Abbott's Life of Napoleon,' that you loaned us."

"Hardly."

"Why is it written in that style?"

"I wonder if you would understand. Perhaps I was not wise to begin this thing. A wise and

good man, Dr. Whately, who loved and believed the Bible, has written this book to prove that what wicked men and unbelievers urge against the truths of the Bible may be urged against the improbable and yet true story of Napoleon Bonaparte. I merely intended to puzzle you with the style of a part of it."

"I would like to hear that part of it—the other is way beyond me."

"The logic, so it is."

"Would grandpapa like the logic? Would it help him?"

"I do not think he needs it."

"Mr. Perez, what *does* he need?"

She turned and looked up with serious eyes.

"Just what I need, I suspect."

"Do you need something?"

"Am I like Prosper?"

"No," she said, smiling. "Oh, I must turn this corner. But I must not stay too long."

"Is your drive satisfactory?"

"What kind of a factory is that?" she asked, mischievously.

"A factory is literally a place where they make things; *satis* signifies enough; therefore a satisfactory is a place where they make enough."

"Then if this carriage makes enough pleasure for me, it is a satis-factory."

"Or if it make enough pain for you, is it a satis-factory?"

"We do not use it so."

"You may; you may say that you are satisfied with my company, that is that you have enough of it."

"A little may be enough then?" she said, with a flash of the eyes that he felt without seeing.

"A little may be too much."

"Am I going far from home?"

"Do you wish to turn?"

"Not unless—"

"Let me take the reins; I will drive faster."

"O no, please; teach me how."

The next five minutes was taken up with a lesson in driving.

"I would like to teach you to drive, Isobel. I would like to teach you one thousand things."

"I think you have."

"I am more and more out of favor with going away; but Jue insists; however, it is not so bad as going to Oxford, as somebody wants me to."

"I should think you would *love* to go. Is Annie Pierrepont there? I long to see her."

"Why?" he asked suspiciously.

"Because she is so beautiful; and I wronged her once."

"Without seeing her?" he said, incredulously.

"And Mr. Prosper was very angry with me. But he is not angry at all now."

"I should think not," with quick resentment.

"Is she there?"

"No, she is at another sea shore."

"I wish I knew—I do not like to ask you—"

"If she will marry him?" he said, with sharp suspicion.

"Yes," she answered seriously.

"I do not think she ever will."

Bel played with the reins. She had not hindered. She had confessed in time. She was so sorry.

He felt the emotion in the half averted eyes; he misunderstood and misconstrued it. His sister had told him about some little happening that morning that his suspicious eyes kept him from seeing things straight.

"Shall we turn?" he asked, in a constrained tone. "Hanover may be too far for you."

"Thank you; if you think so!" she said, disappointedly, yielding the reins to his hands.

Not liking to ask for them again, she sat upright, rubbing the stains off her fingers. Had he forgotten her? He did not speak one word for an entire mile.

"It looks like a shower," she ventured.

She spoke timidly, and he seemed not to hear.

"Oh, Mr. Perez," she said, at last; "Mr. Prosper told me something funny."

"Is it worth repeating?"

"It was worth repeating to me!" she answered, in a tone as uncomfortable as his own.

"Excuse me; what is it? I believe I have not been very social the last five minutes."

"A little of you in that mood is more than enough," she said, saucily. "Mamma said something about women, and he said:

'If a woman were as little as she is good,
A pea shell would make her a gown and a hood.'

"I might make a rhyme of my own:

'If a woman were as little as she is *true*,
An inch of leather would make her a shoe.'

"Are women not true, then?" she questioned with grieved astonishment.

"They are not true when they keep their hearts veiled. When they will not do and speak as they feel."

“Suppose they feel wrong?” she retorted, merrily.

He did not smile or reply. She was glad when the drive was ended.

“Why did you not walk?” asked grandfather.

“I wish I had,” she answered, sharply.

XXV.

DOLLAR BILLS.

THE next Saturday morning grandfather (all the Dekkers spoke of him as grandfather) sat in his chair on the piazza, watching with keen, sleepy-eyed interest the group upon the steps. On the top step, so near his chair that by stretching out her hand she could touch the arm of his chair, Isobel was perched, arrayed in her pink calico morning dress, with her hair in its one long, bright braid, her round cheeks flushed and her laughing eyes even more wide open than usual. It was difficult to believe that the birthday past was not her seventeenth.

The cousins, Prosper and Perez, were at each end of the middle of the flight of broad, wide steps, each with his straw hat upon his knee. Mrs. Kellinger, with her sewing, a white dress for Isobel, had brought her chair to grandfather's side and placed her scissors and spool of cotton on its right

arm, near Isobel's head. This mother and daughter had a way of loving to sit near each other. Mrs. Kellinger had told Prosper Dekker that she did not know that it was *in* her to love as she loved Isobel.

"It is all in her and not in me," she said. "She clung to me when I would have thrown her off."

Two French books were on the upper step beside Bel. Perez had brought them, and she had laid them aside without opening them. Must she speak before them all, about the "lessons?" Would grandpapa call her back if she asked Mr. Perez to go down to the lilac bushes to see that queer little bird's nest?

"I have had news this morning," announced Mr. Prosper Dekker, drawing an envelope from an inner pocket.

Instantly Bel's mind reverted to the days on board the *Goodspeed*. How like and how unlike he was to those strange, new times. When they met again, that meeting she had dreaded, he seemed to have forgotten the last message he sent to her. But the letter in his hand recalled it to her memory with painful force. Had he found "Annie" again, and did they understand each other? Had not her folly done very much harm?

"This letter, Mrs. Kellinger, is from my housekeeper. She has written that she is summoned to her only son. His wife has suddenly died, and he is left with four small children; and I am left without my housekeeper. What shall I do?"

"Is she the only one in the world?" inquired Mrs. Kellinger, arranging her work with precision.

"The only one for me, I thought. She is a motherly soul, a lady every inch, and my household affairs went on like clock work. She has gone and left the house with my young hand-maiden. Good people, all, my invitation for the month holds good; for I can cook myself. I can make coffee and cook a steak."

"Jue will be in her element to take charge," said Perez. "We can go Monday just the same. No one's plans need be disarranged. Miss Isobel, I wish you were going, too. Jue says your mother will do as well, but Prosper and I do not want our reading-circle spoiled by such a gap in it."

"I told Bel this morning I would not go," said Bel's mother.

"And I told her she should go," added Bel; "we do not need mamma, do we grandpapa?"

The old man lifted his head with a twinkle in his eyes.

"She is no good but to look pretty."

"That is a great deal of good," replied Prosper.

"No good to me," persisted grandfather. "I can look at Bel Hope."

"Mr. Devoe," said Prosper, moving around that the old eyes might see his face, "best of all would I like to take *you*."

"Me!" echoed the broken voice; "that is a good joke."

"You are not as old as the old man who lived on one of the Shetland Islands awhile ago; a gentleman heard that a very aged man lived there, and out of curiosity went to visit him. Approaching the cottage, he saw in the field close by an old man at work; he began to talk to him about old age, thinking such a topic might be agreeable, when the old laborer exclaimed: 'It must be my father you have come to see; there he is sitting outside the door.' I translate his speech into good English. And there the old man was, outside the door, sitting on a stone, getting warm in the sunlight. He introduced himself as a traveller who had come to see an old man, but how much was he surprised to hear him saying, pointing in-doors, with his staff: 'It must be my father you have come to see; 'he's there in the house! Going into

the house he found a figure with bleared eyes and furrowed brow, hovering over a peat fire, stretching out his palsied hands to catch the heat. He was sure, now, and he raised his voice, for the veritable old man was as deaf as a door nail, and told him he had come to see a man famous for his great age. But imagine his astonishment when this old man repeated the words of the others: 'It must be my father you have come to see, he's in there;' and in there, sure enough, he found the father of three generations, lying in a box-bed, dried up, and about as lifeless as a mummy."

Grandfather laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks, the others chimed in, and the commotion became so great that Miss Devoe ran through the kitchen and through the hall to look out and inquire into such a hilarious matter.

And then, at grandfather's entreaty, Prosper repeated the story.

"I never heard anything so good in my life;" said Mr. Devoe, still shaking with suppressed laughter.

Marietta lingered in the doorway, in her linen dress, white apron and sweeping cap, the very impersonation of a thrifty housewife.

"She always puts her sweeping cap on, when she bakes;" explained Bel, "and then she's prettier than anybody."

"That is what she does it for," said Perez.

"Miss Marie, I want a housekeeper; can you find me one?" asked Prosper.

"Yes," was the serious reply, "take me."

"I wish I might!"

"It will be your own fault if you do not. I am available, if I would suit you."

"*Marietta!*" exclaimed Mrs. Kellinger.

"Oh, Aunt Marie," exclaimed Bel.

"I am in downright earnest," declared the housekeeper. "I will go this very afternoon."

"I wish I could believe you," said Prosper.

"That is nonsense," cried grandfather. "Marietta, go back to your work and don't be a fool."

With a laugh and a beckoning finger to Prosper, Marietta disappeared; with a laugh, he sprang up and followed her.

"Does she mean it?" asked Perez.

"Yes," returned Marietta's sister, "she has taken it into her head to go somewhere, but I did not think the somewhere would be so soon found. She will go."

"She *wont* go," decided grandfather, lifting his

stick and bringing it down heavily on the floor of the piazza.

"Grandpapa, mamma and I will keep house for you, and you need not pay mamma any money."

"But she will not pay her board then; with her board I pay my housekeeper; it is about as broad as it is long; what shall I make?"

"I pay three dollars a week for my board, you pay Marietta two dollars a week, you gain one dollar a week."

"Fifty-two dollars a year—for Bel Hope," reckoned the old man.

"You will not pay me anything—"

"And *you* will not pay me anything; in this way I shall pay three dollars per week to my housekeeper instead of two," counted the old man, shrewdly, "I repeat, what shall I make?"

"Mr. Prosper will make, grandpapa."

"Mr. Prosper can take care of himself; what do those Dekkers want to come and take my property away for?"

"Don't include Mr. Perez, grandpapa, dear," laughed Bel.

"Yes, do include me," said Mr. Perez, in a very low tone, with a swift glance into the eyes that somehow were looking at him.

"Well, I wont have it, that's all," cried the old man, hoarsely, and lifting his stick to give Perez a poke in the back.

"I wish your grandfather hadn't died, young man; he lived there forty years and never bothered me as you do in one half hour."

Again the peal of laughter rang out; highly incensed, grandfather attempted to rise.

"I'll take you in," said Mrs. Kellinger, letting her work slip off her lap. "Bel and I have learned how to take care of you."

"Great care you'll take," he muttered; "the tomatoes were scorched yesterday because you did it."

"Now, grandfather!" said Mrs. Kellinger, appealingly, as she lifted his hand that it might rest on her shoulder.

"One Isobel is as much a girl as the other," thought Perez, watching Mrs. Kellinger's face and motions, "and sometimes, the elder seems the younger."

The halting steps passed through the hall; Bel took up the books, then laid them down; her throat grew dry, her eyes misty; but it was harder to leave it unsaid than to say it.

"Now for our reading," Perez exclaimed; "come,

Isobel, down to the big apple tree; your grandfather will go to sleep and your mother will fan him."

Reaching for the books, he caught her hand; "come, little girl."

"No-o," she stammered; "Mr. Perez, I would rather have no more lessons!"

"You would! What for? Do I try your patience?"

"No," she said smiling, and drawing her fingers away from his, "but the money—I will take no more money from you; I am sorry I have taken money."

"Do you wish to return it?" he asked, comically.

"I wish I might! So many dollars! But I have spent them," she said, ruefully.

"Good!"

"It is bad. You did it to please me. It has done you no good, Mr. Perez."

"Then it is because my teacher is stupid; I have done my best."

"You will not understand," she said, half vexed.

"Then that is because I am stupid."

"But we are to have no more lessons," she persisted.

"I don't care about the lessons; come down to

the apple tree. We will read to each other and call it fun instead of work; will that do?"

"But you do not see that I am sorry about the money." Her eyes were swimming in tears.

"I do see," he answered gently, "and we will never think of it again, if you say so."

Drawing something from her pocket she laid it in his hand; it was a roll consisting of seven one dollar bills. "Will you take it back?"

"No; for that will admit myself in the wrong."

"Am *I* wrong then, and not you?"

"Nobody is wrong. You are the dearest little goose that ever read French. Buy something for your grandfather with it and then neither of us will have it."

He put the roll into her hand and held her fingers over it.

"Perez!"

Miss Jue's sharp, astonished voice was behind them.

"If we are going Monday morning there's something to do beside nonsense."

At that same instant the sound, "Bel Hope!" came to them with grandfather's feeble impatience.

Bel darted away, and Perez sauntered into the

kitchen to hear the result of his cousin's conference with his self-appointed housekeeper.

Miss Jue seated herself upon the lowest step and fanned herself with her sun-bonnet. There was a life about this house that was not in her own home atmosphere. Perez threw off an oppressive something with these people, and was more like himself, or more unlike himself; and yet they were not wise, or holy, or different from other people. If they were natural, they were naturally disagreeable, as well as agreeable. Mrs. Kellinger had moods of sauciness and fretfulness; and sometimes Isobel was sullen and sometimes sharp. Marietta was the most *even* one, and she often had an indifferent manner. No, it was not because of any unusual excellence, it must be because they were their natural selves. Mrs. Kellinger was bewitching, but the others were common place enough—well! and she sighed, and fanned herself and came to no definite conclusion.

Prosper was in the house and Perez was in the house. She gained nothing by sitting still, or moving about, that she could see; and activity was sweeter than indolence. The sun bonnet was replaced, and with a brisk step she started for home.

Marietta finished her baking that morning with

an absent-mindedness that spoiled grandfather's blackberry pie; the crust was burnt to a cinder.

Strolling the fields together that evening in the twilight Prosper linked his arm within his cousin's and began to speak with an embarrassment that portended an important communication. His first sentences revealed nothing save his confusion.

"They who think clearly speak clearly—as a rule," observed Perez.

"I am thinking clearly enough," was the half laughing response. "I am wondering what you will think of me if I tell you the truth."

"That you are not a liar, at all events."

"You may think me fickle. That dream about Annie Pierrepont is over. I've been cured in the usual way. Old fellow, if I can, I will marry Isobel Kellinger! Don't start so! I know it is ridiculous; but I am not choosing a minister's wife—I am choosing *my* wife! She suits me, even if she will never be a help to me, except by loving me; and that is a great deal to a man. It is all the help I want from a human source. She isn't literary, or even intellectual, full of faults, impulsive; but she is *real*, with a heart capable of devotion, and she is penitent and eager to do the truth as fast as she learns it. Childish even, but hers is a character

that will grow in the sunshine of appreciation—humble and frank—”

“Man alive! What is the good of enumerating such a list of virtues? Can I not read her as well as you?” Perez burst out.

“I think she is more childlike than childish—and her age will not make such a difference,” apologized Prosper.

“Age! that is nothing,” said Perez, furiously. “What do you bring in her age for?”

His face was blanched and his eyes glittering, but Prosper's short-sighted eyes were on the ground, and he did not notice the changes in his voice.

“I have not spoken to her. I can wait.”

Wait he certainly must, was the mental comment of Perez. To speak one such word to her would be to make her a prisoner.

“Why do you wait?” he asked, with harshness. “If you are so bold as to begin, why not fight it out?”

“I am almost sure—she is as transparant as a child! She is quick, she knows my feeling. I shall not speak—for awhile, at least. Do you congratulate me, old friend?”

“Yes,” said Perez, still harshly, “but I confess I

am surprised. I thought you could not change so soon."

"Oh, everybody will be surprised; I am prepared for that. She grows (as if I had to apologize for her), and with me, I speak in all humility, she will grow into all the woman I wish her to be."

"Doubtless," replied Perez, with a laugh. "The sun has set, it is rather gloomy, is it not? Shall we turn homeward?"

"As you please; I could tramp on for hours."

"Go on then; I have some work to do."

"And I will run over and see Isobel."

With his head bent low and his hands in his pockets, Perez Dekker wandered about the rye field, staggering against a shock now and then, and then staggering on: it was dark when he stumbled into the hall. Anastasia was fervent in the kitchen, singing snatches of hymns, Jue sat at a window fanning herself; there were voices on the piazza opposite. Isobel was laughing, and then her mother's voice rebuked her. Isobel, *his* Isobel! And it was Prosper she cared for; no wonder, how could any young girl choose himself in preference; he had been with her when she was homesick and lonely, and she spoke of him with such a light in her eyes; she had loved him before she came to

America, before he had had opportunity to win her. Was that why the "lessons" had become tiresome? Apologizing for *her*! As well apologize for the sweetness of the lily, or the cheer of the sunshine. Why might he not have kept his dream of Annie? Why must he rob him?

How had he discovered her preference? She was the shyest of maidens; but she did appeal oftener to him, and his words brought that bright look to her eyes. If Prosper had won her, there was no other woman in the world for himself; his books should be his wife. He had kept himself under restraint, he had determined that no one should guess what that girl was becoming to him; he would have been wiser had he been as bold as Prosper. But would there have been a chance for him with Prosper in the field? Her preference must have begun in those days in the *Goodspeed*. Could he stay and look on? It was not yet too late; he would accept the work the University had offered him; a trip across the ocean would put the ocean between him and them and he would not be there to look on—the very thought made him savage; how could Prosper know that *he* cared, that he was waiting until she felt at home with him—if the engagement had to be for years and years,

Prosper would bind her with the promise of belonging to him at last. She could no more belong to him than if she were already Prosper's wife. She was steadfast and true; she would not even read French with Prosper's cousin.

In the old man's lifetime Prosper could never woo her away. No wonder he had forgotten that wild little thing, Annie Pierrepont; they were as unlike as the tiger lily and the lily of the valley. He went in, lighted his lamp, wrote his letter of acceptance, then went to the door and called his man to take it to the mail.

"Jue," he said, at bedtime, "I intend to sail for Liverpool Wednesday. You will have to go to the seaside without me."

"Of all things! Perez Dekker! When you told them you wouldn't go."

"And now I have told them I *would*. I suppose you can look over my things."

"I suppose I can do anything I have to."

"So can I. Good night, Jue. Tell Prosper I've gone to bed."

"Of all *things*," repeated Jue, again. "But I suppose I can go to the seaside alone! And Mrs. Kellinger is crazy to go. I wonder what she wants to go *for*? She has been a bird of passage

so long that she can't be easy in any one place. Anyway she's good company."

Her brother's "things" were kept in perfect order. Half an hour's notice would be sufficient for her packing. She did not altogether regret his decision. It would be a change to be with him again in the fall; but she *was* eager to know the spring of its suddenness. At the tea-table he had said he expected to rollick in the ocean, and that he had made out his list of books for summer reading. Had any one beside himself had anything to do with it? She would ask Prosper.

XXVI.

ASLEEP.

“PEREZ! Perez!” called Prosper, in a jubilant voice, entering the sitting-room.

“He isn’t here,” said a displeased voice out of the moonlight. “He has gone to bed.”

“That is sudden!”

“Everything is sudden to-night. He wrote a letter and sent it off and then I put out the light.”

“And you have been sitting here sentimentalizing.”

“That is not in my line,” replied Miss Jue, dryly. “What is the news over the way? Something is always happening over there! If grandfather is cross that is a happening; if Bel cries that is another; if Mrs. Kellinger makes a dress for Marietta, that is a great happening, and even that brown little bird herself has happenings. I never saw such a house. Somebody is in an excitement all the time,” she said, resentfully.

"They are all alive, that is certain."

"Sit down. I want to ask you what makes Perez go off like a flash?"

"To bed? He said he had work to do."

"To bed! To Oxford again, or Canterbury, or London, or somewhere. Didn't you know he expects to sail Wednesday?"

"To *sail* — Wednesday!" he repeated, like a woman, and like a bewildered one.

"So you didn't know it, either," she replied, in a satisfied tone. "I wonder if Bel knows it?"

"I scarcely saw her. She was with her grandfather."

"And you were with the widow!" was the sarcastic retort.

"I never think of her as that. She is too young."

"Her dress urges it upon you all the time. I believe she wears it just to be bewitching."

"Are you bewitched?"

"More than I want to be. Is she going with us?"

"I wish you might have heard the talk between the sisters!" he said, with the laugh still in his voice. He seemed to be too much on the alert to keep quiet, he was moving about in the moonlight.

"Isobel said she would not go with you, and Marietta contended that she should. Isobel was cross and Marietta was sharp. Finally it was decided that Isobel should go for the month, as you had planned, and then Marietta is to come—to be my housekeeper."

Miss Jue's breath seemed to be literally taken from her.

She ejaculated a prolonged, "Well!"

"That is only another one of the happenings over there!" he said.

"Well, I never! I never did! Whose work is that?"

"Mine, principally."

"The old man will never let her go."

"She will go, nevertheless. Isobel is to be housekeeper."

"That girl!" said Miss Jue, scornfully.

"Not the girl; the mother. I never think of the girl as Isobel. No one calls the daughter Isobel."

"Well, I suppose nobody does but Perez. He says the name belongs to her. We always call the mother Mrs. Kellinger."

"The mother! The sister, rather."

"They are like sisters, and they treat each other so. Bel said to her mother to-day, 'Mamma, we

are like sisters, only we love each other a great deal better. Perez going is not the only happening to-night. Doesn't anybody know it over there?" she asked.

"No more than I did. I have counted on this vacation with him; we were to be two boys together."

"There's no counting on him, or on anybody, now-a-days. To confess the truth, Prosper, I am glad he is going; nothing could suit me better; I never liked those French lessons," she continued, in a tone that became more and more confidential.

"She is only a child. Seventeen, or thereabouts."

"But she is growing up."

"So are we all of us," he laughed, "and growing old, beside."

"That is no laughing matter," said Miss Jue, sharply.

"It is a matter of congratulation to the Chinese, as the years go by, that one has been spared to add another to the term of life."

"That is a heathen way of looking at it."

"It strikes me as decidedly Christian."

"Mrs. Kellinger wouldn't tell her age for anything."

“She told me to-night.”

“How old is she?”

“Guess.”

Miss Jue pursed up her lips to calculate.

“She *looks* thirty-five.”

“A woman is no older than she looks, somebody says. Thirty-five she is, then.”

“But she was married twenty years ago.”

“The salt air has kept her fresh. Does she look older than I do?”

“You always looked older than your years.”

“Awhile ago I spent Sunday with a college friend and preached for him ; I knew he had married a woman twenty years older than himself, and I hated to go. Five children, too, she had. I refused, at first ; I knew it made trouble in his family ; and I expected to see him broken down and miserable. But I went ; he was at a funeral and she received me. At the end of over two hours together I had determined to tell him that he was wise to brave the ridicule for her sake. She is the most charming woman I ever met ; she looks her age—fifty, I suppose. She is devoted to him and to his work ; he is devoted to her and to her children ; he told me the whole parish loved her.”

“Is that a true story?”

"I will take you to them and you shall judge for yourself."

"What is the moral of it all?"

"That when a man knows what he is about he does well to do it. When I left I said to him: 'God, the best maker of marriages, bless you,' and he wrung my hand, too touched to speak."

Miss Jue was touched, also. But God, the best maker of marriages, had not blessed her.

"I'll run up and see what the old fellow means."

He ran up and tapped at the door, but the old fellow evidently meant nothing but sleep, for he was not bidden to enter; he pushed the door open; there was no motion in the bed; he went to the bed-side and laid his hand upon the black head.

"Perez, old fellow," he said, softly.

No movement, no reply.

"There's another day," said Prosper, as he left the room.

In the narrow stairway he met Miss Jue coming up with a glass of water in her hand.

"Prosper," she whispered, "do you think Bel has had anything to do with his going?"

Standing above her, he looked down with a sparkle in his eyes she could not detect: "Cousin Jue, it is said of some wise man, that he could be silent in ten languages; let us be silent in one."

"If she will keep still in French!" she muttered.

XXVII.

IN THE SHED AND ON THE PIAZZA.

"I MUST have my good times. I would die if I did not," sobbed Isobel, with a choking little sob. Then she brushed the tears out of her eyes and lifted herself up, and her eyes flashed with indignant light.

She was bending over the stove in the shed, stirring grandfather's evening cup of cocoa.

It was Monday evening, and Perez Dekker had crossed the street to say a hurried good-bye to them all. Early in the morning he was going to New York, and the next day would sail for Liverpool; planning to spend the long vacation in England and Germany. There had been a whisper of it before; but she thought he had decided not to go; all Sunday she had not seen him to speak to him, and on Monday morning he had driven away with Mr. Prosper, and had not returned until dusk. She had been cross all day, and once had spoken sharply to poor grandpapa.

Ten minutes ago he had come into the shed to find her and to say that he had but two minutes to stay.

"It was hardly worth while for you to come at all, Mr. Perez," she had answered, proudly.

"I thought so myself. But I decided to come. I wanted to wish you a happy summer."

"Thanks, monsieur," with the slightest possible touch of sarcasm.

"I decided to go in great haste, but I do not regret it."

"Why should you, if your work calls you?"

Her work busied her just then, for the pot of cocoa was boiling over.

"Jue will write me all the news. I hope to hear good news of my little French teacher."

"There will be nothing to hear," she answered, quietly, "I shall go on in that horrid, dry old way."

Had he said, "*You* will write me all the news?" would she care to write to him? Oh, how she would look forward to his letters! Would they be like his charming, sincere, comical talk? But he had not promised to write her, he had only asked her to write to him; and she would not promise. He must ask her again.

"You will often see my cousin," he said, watching the flushed face bent over the cocoa pot.

"Mr. Prosper! I hope so."

He extended his hand. She gave her own with unusual shyness, and immediately withdrew it. He thought she did not touch his fingers.

"Good-bye, Isobel."

"Good-bye, Mr. Perez," she returned, lightly.

She was stirring the cocoa. She did not lift her eyes until he passed through the doorway into the kitchen: and then a wave of bitterest disappointment swept over heart and mind and soul. How she had looked forward to "good times" in this long vacation.

And now the sun would not shine for her until he came back to her again. In an instant it was revealed to her how all her happiness had depended upon his coming, or promising to come. Every morning she had watched at the window to see him on the piazza; and every evening she was stationed there awaiting his return. The eyes were sure to be turned toward her, the hat was sure to be lifted, and then—it was nothing, it was only himself near her; but that was all she cared to have.

Was he displeased with her? Was it because

she had spoken so about the lessons? Was it because she had laid that money in his hand? Had she made him the more displeased by not promising to write? But he was so constrained and cold. He had never been like that before.

“Child! What’s burning? Oh, that cocoa!”

With a quick motion Mrs. Kellinger pushed the cocoa pot back on the stove.

“Run to grandfather. I’ll bring it in.”

Grandfather was thumping as usual, when she overstayed her time. His small clock was on the table. He had given her fifteen minutes to be away, and it was seventeen when he began to thump; he told himself that he was very forbearing. She had such a careless way of loitering; all day to-day she had been absent-minded and had done nothing yesterday, either, but stand at the window. Marietta said she looked pale, but why should a girl that had nothing to do look pale?

“I wanted to know if my cocoa is done?” he said, in a tone of high displeasure, when she appeared and stood before him, as if awaiting orders.

“I was about bringing it,” she said with unusual humility.

“Be about it, then.”

He was becoming irritable and moody, and with

his moodiness more than ever suspicious and jealous; the roughness in his tone of command was something new. He had not forgiven Perez Dekker for saying that he could not go across the sea without a good-bye to his little friend.

"I hope he'll *stay* there," he muttered, as "the little friend" moved obediently away.

After contentedly sipping his cocoa, he leaned back and fell into a doze. Bel sat motionless on a hassock at his side, her head resting on the arm of his chair; her eyes were dull and she was quivering as if suffering physical pain. Something reminded her of those days in Shields when she lay so still and had but one thought—that mamma was not her mother.

It was like those days—she had lost something. Mamma had come back dearer than ever; and she never even wished for her own mother; but this could not end like that. It was ended now, because if he cared for her at all, as she cared for him, he would not leave her like that; he would say or do some little thing; he could not be so cold and so hard.

"They are both asleep," cried Aunt Marie's voice: "the two children!" Aunt Marie looked in and then whisked away.

There were other voices on the piazza. Her mother's low and light, intermingling her laugh with the deep and serious voice.

"He is a pusher," Prosper Dekker was saying.

"His pushing is not apparent enough to make people uncomfortable."

"People have to be made uncomfortable," was the reply, with strong emphasis.

"I know *you* believe in it," with grave sauciness.

"He is the most determined person in his mind and the least in his manner that I know. I never think of urging him to change his plans."

"Why should you?" with indignant remonstrance.

"They spoil mine—as now. There is but one thing in the world for him to do; his work, and himself is the only person, and now is the only time."

"That is grand. I like it," in her enthusiastic style.

"You wish I were like him?"

"You are. I was thinking that you were describing your own self."

"Do you know that you are a *rest* to me?" with a dangerous fondness in the lowered tone.

"Because I am so silly?"

"Yes, if you will put it that way. The things of this life are a great rest and refreshment to me; the mental part of us cannot bear the unceasing strain of stretching after heavenly things. I remember, one day, after a long talk on post-mortem probation with Perez, what a delight it was to come back to some trifling question of the day."

"Just as after the last sermon of yours in that English magazine, I was glad to come back to patterns and dressmaking."

"Did the sermon hinder the dressmaking?"

"No, it helped it. That is why I understand how my light mind is a rest to you. You do not have to think to talk to me."

"I have to *feel*, and perhaps that is more wearisome."

"Don't then," she laughed; "I didn't know you could talk nonsense."

"If I couldn't, I couldn't talk sense."

"I don't understand that."

"Grow to it."

"I do not grow—like Bel."

"I do not wish you to grow like Bel."

Again the low laugh. Bel had not listened to the words.

"I am so glad—that I may grow at all, that it isn't too late."

"It is never too late—not till the last breath."

"Is it *then*?"

"The door is shut then. It is too late to enter into the kingdom," with a voice as grave as if no lightness were ever a part of it.

"Mr. Dekker, I wish I could pray for my husband," said Mrs. Kellinger, after a long pause.

"Did you ever pray for him?"

"Never—I think. I do not know. I told you I never used to pray at all."

"An aged man, as old as Mr. Devoe, told me that he prayed in his childhood and up to the age of freedom—twenty-one, and that he had not prayed since."

"I thought that what one was in childhood determined the character—that doesn't look like it."

"It only proves that it was never real prayer. It was simply a form that he cast off, as George Eliot and Harriet Martineau cast off their form of religious faith. They saw through its hollowness, and no wonder, and they never saw faith in its genuineness and simplicity."

"I did not until I saw it in you."

"When did you see it in me?"

"Do you remember that day in Shields you called to see Bel, and I saw you first down-stairs? Don't you remember how you talked to me?"

"I was very rude, no doubt."

"I thought you unpardonably so. You frightened me to death. I said in my thoughtless way: 'Oh, I am a great sinner,' and you said: 'Do you really believe that you are a great sinner?' and I said: 'Of course I do.' What else could I say? I was just thinking how hard I had been to poor little Bel. And you asked me what I was going to do about it, and I said I didn't expect to do anything; and you said, fixing your solemn eyes on me: '*God will do something if you do not.*' How many nights that frightened me!"

"And has he not done something?"

"Yes," she answered, softly, "he has forgiven me."

"I meant that he would forgive you or punish you."

"He *has* punished me."

"That he might forgive you."

Bel raised her head and caught these words: "How does punishment come that forgiveness may come afterward?"

Was *she* punished now for neglecting grand-

papa? But because he took care of her body, had he a right to her *soul*? Could she not think of anybody beside? Oh, how angry he would be if he knew her thoughts!

“What have I been doing to-day?” said one of the voices outside the window; “before breakfast I read an article entitled: ‘Was St. Peter ever at Rome?’ and it was proved that he never was.”

“What difference does it make to anybody?”

“It makes a difference to the Papists;” they claim that he was in the city in the year 42; that he held the pontificate of Rome twenty-five years, and became a martyr under Nero in the year 66.”

“How do they prove that isn’t true?” she asked, with some interest.

“Wouldn’t you think me stupid if I should go through all the reasoning?”

“I believe I *would* rather take your word for it,” she said, laughing. “But I am interested in Rome, and can prove that I was there in 1865.”

How happy her mother was to-night! Bel listened in spite of herself.

“You would rather hear about artificial digestion, wouldn’t you? Think of putting—I will not tell you what—into a bottle with half an ounce of water, and adding half a drachm of hard boiled

egg chopped small, and then standing it in a warm place at the temperature of from one hundred to one hundred and ten degrees, and watch the digestion; it should be perfect in two hours."

"I thought hard-boiled eggs were indigestible."

"An old parishioner of mine, over ninety, used to take a hard-boiled egg and a cup of coffee late at night to cure his dyspepsia."

The amused laugh hurt Bel; how could her mother be so light; did nobody care that her heart was breaking? Had her mother so soon forgotten her own trouble?

"Bel Hope," cried the half-awakened voice, "are you there?"

"Well, grandpapa, dear?"

"Are we all in the dark?"

"In the moonlight."

"I was dreaming about your mother; your grandmother, I mean."

XXVIII.

TRUE.

THE voices on the piazza ceased. Mrs. Kellinger came in with a white, fleecy something on her head. "Why, folkses, are you all asleep and dreaming?"

The gate opposite swung to; Bel sprang to her feet; was he coming again to say good-bye, and to ask her to write, and to explain why he had been so sharp and constrained?

Coming in with a lamp in her hand, as the light fell over the girl's startled face, Marietta exclaimed: "Bel, what ails you? Have you seen a ghost?"

But no footsteps followed the swinging of the gate; the lamp was set down on the table in the bay window, and Aunt Marie settled herself to sew; her mother ran lightly up-stairs, grandpapa blinked in the lamp light; every thing was going on as usual; everything would go on as usual for ages and ages.

The gate swung to after Prosper Dekker; he stepped upon the piazza as Perez appeared from the far end of it; a black figure in the moonlight, with its head bent forward.

"Why didn't you come over for your last evening, old fellow?"

"I had something else to do."

"The house was as still as a mouse, not a light inside; and Isobel and I had our conference on the piazza. I proposed a moonlight walk, but she was not disposed. We shall have the moonlight on the water before the moon rises too late."

"Is she *going*? How have you brought her grandfather around?"

"Her grandfather! What do you mean? Man," stepping up to Perez, and laying his hand on his arm: "have you thought all this time I meant *Bel*? Didn't you know I meant Isobel, the mother?"

What Perez had thought, he did not reveal. He pushed his companion backward and rushed past him, out from the shaded piazza, down the path to the gate. Again the gate swung to, and this time Perez was on the wooden steps in the green bank. The second gate was opened; with less impulse he walked slowly towards the house. The sitting-

room windows were lighted, and Bel's voice, not Isobel's, was singing one of the simple songs the old man liked.

For an hour he passed up and down the path, leading from the gate around to the kitchen door. A figure in shirt sleeves crowned with a broad straw hat leaped over the fence at the foot of the lawn, hurried up to the steps, and ran up to the hall door.

"Sam is late to-night," Mrs. Kellinger's voice had remarked in the hall.

In a moment she would be free. He would intercept her as she passed into the hall. He could not leave her without another good-bye. Would she be as shy as she was four hours ago?

There was a step on the piazza now, but the dress was black and the head was dark. Emerging from the shadow, he called softly:

"Mrs. Kellinger."

She stepped to the railing and looked around.

"Mr. Perez! How you startled me! Is any one ill?"

"Excuse me," he said, running up the steps, "but I must see Isobel again, if I may."

"Surely you may. I think she is in the sitting-room. Grandfather has retired."

"May I say what I please to her?"

"You may say anything she pleases to hear; but be careful. If you startle her she will be afraid of you. She is such a child."

"I will not startle her. I did not know you had penetrated—"

"Trust a mother for that," she returned, with assumed lightness.

"Tell me, do you think she cares for me?"

"I *know* she does," with strong assurance. "But I doubt if *she* knows it. I think she minds your sudden going."

After going to her grandfather's bedside to kiss him good-night and to ask if he would like to have her sit there and fan him until he fell asleep, with slow steps she returned to the arm-chair in the bay window: shrinking into herself as she drew herself down into it, and shading her eyes from the light with the English magazine she had read that afternoon and laid on the broad arm of the chair; for several minutes she sat absorbed in her own thoughts, unaware of another presence in the room. A movement somewhere caused her to drop the hand holding the magazine.

"Mr. Perez," she uttered, in slow surprise.

"I should think you would be surprised," he

said, coming to her and speaking low. "I was a bear this afternoon. I have come to beg your pardon."

"Was I a bear too?" she asked, the color rushing to cheek and brow.

"You were a timid little puss."

The hand was lifted again to shield her eyes.

"I misunderstood. I thought you did not care whether I went or stayed."

He could not see the shielded, laughing eyes; but the voice was merry enough to set his heart at rest.

"How do you know you misunderstood?"

With that he caught her hand, tossed away the intercepting magazine, and looked straight down into the uplifted eyes.

"Isobel, will you be my wife some day?"

His words startled himself; they surely uttered themselves of their own will and not of his will.

"No;" with grave voice and grave eyes: "I must stay always and be a comfort to grandpapa."

"Is that the only reason?" he asked, catching the other hand and holding both in both his own.

"You are my prisoner, you shall not go until you answer me."

Her head drooped until it touched his hands.

"You must come of your own free will; you may take your hands away if you choose."

Her fingers moved, the hands were half withdrawn, then pushed into the strong clasp again.

"Bel Hope!" Bel Hope!" called the thick impatient voice from the next room, "Is somebody in there with you?"

"I will see you in the morning," Perez whispered, lifting the hands that had answered him to his heart's content to his lips and then kissing brow and cheek. "My little Isobel, I will be very good to you."

"Bel Hope! Bel Hope! Is somebody in there?"

Moved by something within herself too strong to be resisted, Bel Hope walked straight in to her grandfather's bedside.

"Grandpapa, dear; I will never deceive you like my mother; Mr. Perez has asked me to be his wife some day, and I could not help saying 'yes.' But I will *never* go away from you as long as you live."

A burst of groans and tears was the only response; when he found a voice to speak he cried: "I knew it! I knew it all along, and I tried to do my best."

"Yes, grandpapa, dear," caressing his cheek as she would a child, "and I have tried to do my best,

and I always will. I will never go away from you. Do you believe me?"

"No, no, no, he said chokingly, "I don't believe anybody."

Throwing herself upon her knees, she laid her head beside the white head on the pillow: "Grandpapa, think a minute! Could I deceive you if I wanted to? Did I *have* to come and tell you this? I chose to come because I desire to be true and to be a comfort to you."

"But I don't know what you will do next!" he groaned, helplessly.

"You will see. I shall do every day just as I have done!"

"I wish I could believe it," he moaned; "you have broken my heart as your mother did."

He kept her hand and would not let her go, asking her again and again to promise that she would not run away from him. She stayed beside him until he slept, and then in his uneasy slumber he burst into sighs and groans. It was hours before she slept; her last thought sleeping, and her first thought awaking was the same: "I have not done as poor mamma did."

XXIX.

FURS.

To Miss Jue's great annoyance Mrs. Kellinger refused to go with her to the sea side unless she might take board somewhere along the shore.

"We can see each other every day, Miss Jue."

"But I want somebody in the house with me; I know Prosper, he will stay in his study or wander off by himself."

But Mrs. Kellinger was firm, so firm that, at last, she decided to remain at home.

"Has anything happened? Something is always happening over here?"

"Grandfather isn't so well, and—Marietta is going so soon—and—"

"Then I won't go myself! I don't see why other people's plans have to disarrange me, but they always do. Perez is gone, and you wont go! I'll stay and work in my garden. I don't believe Prosper will go either."

To nobody's surprise Prosper did not go; he said he was waiting for his housekeeper. He waited until September, when Perez returned. The second week in September he took Marietta and went his way. Her first letter to her sister stated that her cup was full; she had nothing to ask. The handmaiden was quick and willing; the house was convenient and she had time to herself; too much time, for Mr. Prosper would be away Sundays almost all winter, and probably weeks at a time; for he was to do a "new kind of work," and preach wherever he was sent for; she felt, at last, that she was in the place where she was meant to be.

"A rolling stone gathers no moss," was grandfather's comment, when the letter was read aloud. "Can't he get a call to one place?"

"Not when he has a call to so many," said Mrs. Kellinger. "He told me about his new work last summer."

Grandfather was not able to leave his room this winter. All day he sat by the fire and at night was lifted into bed.

Sam Watts and his wife took up their abode in the house. Mrs. Kellinger said she did not feel "safe" unless he were within call.

"I ain't never been baptized," he said one day, in midwinter.

"Neither have I," said Mrs. Kellinger.

"But I want to be and you don't."

She smiled and did not contradict him.

"It aint safe to put it off at my age."

"Grandfather, you know—that isn't all."

"Of course it aint all! Do you suppose I sit here and think and have Bel Hope read to me, and then believe water on my head and a minister saying words over me can make it all right?"

"But you never talk—"

"I aint the talking kind. I know what to talk, but I don't know how. Marietta said once the Lord was merciful only to sinners and I wanted to be a sinner after that! I didn't think I was before. I have forgiven everybody, I aint no grudge against Kellinger, not that he did right, though. It was *dreadful* to hate the dead. I want you to write to Marietta to tell Prosper Dekker to come and baptize me. And he's got to baptize Bel Hope. It ought to have been done before, and I want to see it done with my own eyes. I asked her if she was a sinner, and she said yes; and a forgiven sinner, and she said she wanted to be. Her sins aint like mine, but the whitest heart down here

looks black up there. I've learnt that sitting and thinking and laying awake of nights. It is a blessed good thing for a man to have a thinking time at the end of his days."

That afternoon he asked Bel if her mother had written to Prosper Dekker, and when she replied that Sam had taken the letter to the mail, he looked pleased; and, after a quiet hour, asked her to read "something good."

"How good?" Bel inquired.

"Something to help me to be ready," he said.

After a moment's thinking, she exclaimed joyfully: "O, grandpapa, I know," and ran joyfully up-stairs for her treasure; the book she had loved so well upon the Goodspeed. Like a child, the old man drank in every word, and the next day and the next asked to have read again the chapter headed: '*Why should we come to the Supper?*'

Sitting at the window with her sewing, Mrs. Kellinger listened. "We should come," read Isabel, sitting at her grandfather's side, with his hand in hers, "because the Lord Jesus commands us to come. To all who love him he says: 'Do this in remembrance of me.' In another place he says: 'If ye love me keep my commandments.'

“You know it is not very hard to obey those whom we love.

“We should come because it is profitable for us; it will surely do us good if we come in the right way. Do you ask what good it can do us? I will try to tell you.

“Our hearts are worldly, our memories are poor, our love is changeable, we are actually in danger of forgetting Christ and his great love. The feast is, as you have already learned, to remind us of Christ. Here at the table everything speaks to us of our crucified Saviour. When we look upon the bread we think of his body broken for us, and the wine poured out makes us think of his precious blood shed for us.

“We are reminded of the cross with the suffering Saviour stretched upon it. We remember that our sins caused his suffering.

“Yes, our sins, for we are sinners, and sin must be punished, so God punished Christ in our place. ‘He bore our sins, (that is the punishment of them) in his own body on the tree.’

“Think how great was the love of God the Father to be willing to let his dear Son suffer in our stead. And how great was the love of God the Son to be willing to suffer. When we remem-

ber all this I think it will lead us back to Christ if we have wandered away. And after each Communion it seems as if we could not help loving Christ more.

“If it has this effect, surely you can see what good the feast will do us. For our greatest need is more love to the Lord Jesus.”

“Did Prosper Dekker write that?” inquired Grandfather.

“O no,” said Bel, “he only gave me the book. A lady wrote it.”

“It’s good enough to be him.”

“It reminds me of him,” said Mrs. Kellenger.

“His life makes it all the more true to me,” said Bel.

“Go on,” said Grandfather, “and read as slow as you can.”

“And then in getting acquainted with Christ at these feasts. Satan would like it better if Christ always seemed to us as one very distant ; as a great God far off in Heaven, and as one whom we must fear. But Christ would have us look upon Him as a very near and dear friend, whose heart is full of love to us, and who is willing always to hear and help us.”

A gentle rap at the sitting-room door caused the

leaves to flutter in Bel's fingers; the step upon the sitting-room carpet brought the reading to a pause.

"Go on," urged grandfather, impatiently.

"Some one has come," said Bel.

"Isobel, go and see," commanded the old man.

"It is Perez," said Mrs. Kellenger, catching a glimpse of him through the open door. "I will read, grandfather, if you will let Bel go."

As her sewing slipped from her hands she came forward to take the book. Bel half arose and looked undecided.

"May he not come in here?"

"No," exclaimed the old man, with loud impatience, "he is always interrupting. Let him go home again."

"Let Bel see him first," suggested Mrs. Kellenger, taking the book from Bel's fingers, "Go, and I will read."

With the uneasy feeling that she was "neglecting grandpapa," she arose and lingered.

"I'll be back soon, grandpapa, dear."

Perez was moving up and down in the sitting-room; through the bay window Bel caught gleams of the sunset on the snow.

"Hurry, Isobel; we have time for a sleigh ride

before the sun is down; the moon will soon be up. It is glorious; the air is still and sharp; you need to get some color in your cheeks."

Taking her into his arms he looked down into her face.

"This is the first time I have seen you to-day. Where were you this morning when my bells jingled past?"

"In the kitchen, making ginger tea," she answered.

"Put on your wraps, and Frisk shall show you what he can do for us."

The brightened face looked doubtful. "But, Perez, you took me last night. How can I go again?"

"Put on your things and I will show you. Run along, Puss."

"Bel Hope! Bel Hope!"

Perez uttered an exclamation of strong impatience.

"I wish he would forget your name."

"He does sometimes. He calls me 'Hope' a great deal."

"He shall not interfere with my rights. No man shall."

Bel moved away with the usual heartache; one

of them must be displeased with her; last night it was grandpapa; must it be Perez to-night?

"I wonder how it would feel to have a good time *all* good," she said to herself.

"Please hurry, Bel," urged Perez, with forced patience. "You stand as still as though the sun were standing still."

Giving him a bright glance she went in to Grandfather; his head had fallen forward, he was fast asleep.

Dancing back to Perez, she cried: "It is too good; he's asleep. Mamma will keep him amused if he should awake."

Her Christmas gift from him, her fur cloak and blue velvet turban trimmed with fur to match, were soon donned and she ran radiant out to the sleigh.

"I bought this sleigh for you, Puss; do you think I mean to let you stay in that hot room all this winter?"

She stooped for snow to toss at him, but, divining her intention, he caught her in his arms, and ran down the bank with her and deposited the struggling, laughing bundle of fur among the robes of the sleigh.

"I will show you a frozen river. I regret this

higher temperature; I would like to keep the thermometer below zero all winter."

"Please do, for my sake."

"Prosper's coming next week for the skating. You must go, too. I will get skates for you. Annie Pierrepont shoots over the ice like a bird."

"Will she come?"

"Prosper has no right to bring her; are you forgetting?"

"I never give that up; it seems one of the right things; one of the beautiful things; she will love all the better after she has grown up to it."

"Do girls have to do that?"

"They have to grow up to *everything*," she said, earnestly. "You know I had to grow up to you, and I am only half way up now."

"Just up to my lips," he retorted; "don't you dare to get any higher."

"Oh, *do* you remember how you laughed at me because when you asked me if the Indians rode in the cars in New York city with the white people, I indignantly said they ought to! I thought there might be whole tribes in New York and Philadelphia."

"You don't know much better now, little child."

"Only enough better," was the laughing repartee.

XXX.

IN THE WINDOW SEAT.

THE parlor, or drawing-room, or study, or family room at Mr. Prosper Dekker's farm-house was cosy in winter and green and cool in summer; the house-keeper had made few changes and these few were in keeping with the old fashions; she liked to call it the "family room," when the master was at home, and she took her sewing to sit at the other side of the fire-place while he read or wrote; he came home to rest, but the rest was ever with pen or book in hand. He told her that he had never worked so hard in his life.

The low ceiled, deep-windowed room was green with the huge jar of ferns in the open fire-place, and sweet with the bunches of pennyroyal Marietta had placed on the writing-table and the mantel one August afternoon, when two ladies sat awaiting the appearance of the master of this old-fashioned household.

The maiden who ushered them in was sleepy-eyed and wide mouthed, uncouth in dress and manner, but the little lady who had flitted through the hall with whitened hair and dress of chocolate calico, prettily made, was another sort of being; she had disappeared up the stairway after speaking to the servant.

"Did you say that Mr. Dekker would not be home for half an hour?" the little lady had said to the uncouth handmaiden.

The young lady looked at the elderly lady. "Mamma, who is she? Prosper's fairy god-mother?"

"She seems a part of the past. Annie, it is three years since we spent the summer here with those old people."

Annie Pierrepont did not need to be reminded; was it not in this very room, perched up on this very window seat where she was sitting now, that Prosper Dekker had startled her even into tears by asking her to become his dear little wife when he returned from his search after health.

He had returned, and the search was successful, and she was not his dear little wife; she was nineteen, and older and wiser, and she had never seen any one like him, and how she had missed him!

Fred Graham was fun for a drive or an evening's nonsense, and young Dr. Wharton was handsome, (Prosper was not one bit handsome) and that rich old man at Florence had promised her all the world could give; but somehow, she had kept in her mind a picture of this quaint room and herself stealing in to read the novel Prosper had said she must not read, and a picture of him standing before her as she hid the book behind her and laughed; she had expected a sharp reprimand, but he had not seemed to notice the book; he stood and looked at her as if he were not seeing her at all, and then he spoke of going away and wondered if she would miss him, and then he said—how often she had repeated the words since that time in Florence when he had given her up, and broken his own promise so that she might not have to break hers.

She was older now, she was nineteen, mamma was married at nineteen, and even if Prosper *was* so old, and she had known him all her life, and even if he were so different, so good and learned, she could learn to be good and she could learn to read some of his books. She would learn any hard thing for his sake.

Annie Pierrepont was an exquisite little crea-

ture ; Prosper had never seen any one like her—outside of a book, and she was not spoiled, she was as simple hearted as Isobel who had never been flattered, and who had never had her own way.

Annie Pierrepont had had her own way to-day.

“Mamma, we have been here two days and Prosper has not called,” she said that afternoon. “I am certain he has received my note. I thought he would be here as soon as we were.”

As she spoke she opened the window and stepped out on the long third story balcony of the great hotel on the shore.

“I thought I wanted to stay a month; but I don’t think I care. I like that old farm house better, even if we can’t see the water. We can drive every day.”

“But Annie, those old people are not there; Prosper has purchased the place and is keeping house; you surely do not intend to visit *him* ?

“But he has a housekeeper, I suppose, and there is room for us.”

“There may not be room—now. Are you forgetting?”

“I am remembering, and that is why I wish to go.”

She stood a long time on the balcony, leaning on the rail, gazing at the sunshine on the waves and "remembering."

"Mamma, I am going there! This afternoon. I want to see that room again! And that queer garden. Will you order a carriage?"

"Annie Pierrepont! When he has not come to you!"

"I am not going to him; I am going to that house. He may not be at home. You know he goes everywhere now."

"Annie, I know you are a silly child."

"And I know you are a darling mother and will take me."

Mrs. Pierrepont fidgeted and listened; she was not at all glad that she had brought Annie; she was not pleased with her attitude, or her silence; was the child regretting? Who knew that it might not be too late?

Was Prosper Dekker the man to forget? She had assured him that her indecision was the caprice of a child; that Annie would know her own mind by-and-by.

"Mamma, I am going to look around."

"Shall I go, too?"

"No. I want to go alone."

"To the garden?"

"No. I want to see that queer-shaped little room under the roof I used to have."

"You must ask some one—"

"In Prosper's house? Ridiculous!"

She had removed her gloves; she threw aside her hat, and after giving her mother a shy kiss, as if asking her benediction, she went away.

If she could find Prosper and surprise him, she would know by his first look if he were glad—as glad as she was. And she would say, "Forgive me," and he would forgive her.

A door stood open at the end of the square entry. Up the seven steps past this door was her queer room under the roof; nobody could be there, now; who could?

With a smile at her own audacity, she ran up the seven steps. Another door stood open and somebody was there. A lady, tall and very slight, dressed in black with tuberose in her belt. The lady turned at the sound of the footsteps, and the girl stood ashamed and confused.

"I beg your pardon. I had no thought of intruding."

The lady—how handsome she was—Annie felt

the fascination of her presence as she had felt the fascination of certain paintings. The lady smiled and asked her to come and see the room, if it were worth seeing.

"That is what I came for," said Annie, instantly recovering her self-possession. "I am Annie Pierrepont, and I spent one summer here, three years ago."

"And this was your room, as it is mine."

"It is prettier now," Annie said, stepping inside. "It is changed."

"Mr. Dekker has made several changes."

Then she asked, shyly,

"Will he soon be in?"

"He is driving in now. He started out intending to call at your hotel. He received your note this morning."

Annie Pierrepont was too well-bred to stare at this unknown, beautiful woman, who seemed to be at home with Prosper Dekker. But the well-bred surprise was in her tone and manner.

"He should have had it last night."

"So he said. Shall we go down to him?"

"Excuse me, are you—boarding here?"

"I am visiting my sister. My sister is,"—Mrs.

Kellinger was ashamed of her pride,—“Mr. Dekker’s housekeeper.”

“That little woman!” cried Annie, delightedly. “I fell in love with her.”

Annie ran down the seven steps with an unburdened heart. Prosper *had* gone to find her. And this lady was only his housekeeper’s sister.

He was in the parlor shaking hands with her mother. He would turn and see her in the doorway; the beautiful lady had vanished. There was no one now to come between her and her old, old friend.

“Annie! My dear little Annie!”

He caught her in his arms and kissed her as he had done when she was five years old; and then he lifted her to the window seat and stood, as he had that day, looking at her. She had hidden the book then. Had she something now to hide?

“Annie, you haven’t changed one bit,” with an inflection of deepest satisfaction.

“*You* have,” she laughed, shyly; “you look younger. I used to think you very old.”

“I am younger,” he returned; “younger and stronger.”

“You look as though you had never been ill,” said Mrs. Pierrepont.

"With exercise and rest I keep well."

"You will not break down again," decided Annie.

"I trust not. But come and see my house and grounds."

"And your housekeeper," added Annie, "and her sister."

"Oh, you have seen Mrs. Kellinger. I told her I should bring you here. You were very kind not to wait."

A shyness had grown upon Annie that she did not enjoy or understand. She had never felt shy with this big brother in all her life before. How strange for him to seem young; or was it that she had grown old?

"Isobel," he said to his housekeeper's sister, opening a side door to speak to her, "come here, and help me show these good friends our orchard and garden."

XXXI.

STRONG AND WEAK.

TEA was over (such a queer informal tea, but delightful) and Prosper Dekker had driven the ladies to their hotel.

“Wouldn’t a walk on the pier be splendid!” exclaimed Annie. “They do not want you at home. Your housekeeper and her sister can entertain each other. Prosper, your housekeeper came to the tea-table with us.”

“Where should she come if not to the table, and when, if not at the tea-table, and who should if not herself?”

“She is a lady, I know,” Annie conceded.

“And her sister?” he asked, with a gleam of quiet humor.

“Oh, she *is* bewitching; she knows Rome as well as I do! And London better! Why is her sister your housekeeper?”

“Because we both desire it.”

"Would the sister be housekeeper if you desired it?"

"I have never asked the question," he answered, gravely.

"Are they poor?"

"You would call them poor. Mrs. Kellinger has a little money, but she has a daughter to support. A daughter older than you are."

"Why don't she support herself—the daughter."

"I think she does."

"Is she—Mrs. Kellinger—going home soon?"

"Why?"

"Oh, I wanted to know! Don't you want to go out on the pier?"

"Some other night. Mrs. Kellinger returns to-morrow and I must have the evening at home."

"You do not have to entertain her, Prosper. Where is her sister?" with the old pretty, coaxing, half-caressing manner.

"I am very sorry to refuse you; I will come to-morrow evening," with the old, big-brother tone.

"I may not care to go to-morrow evening," petulant and indignant.

"Oh, yes you will. You will want to see the moon rise."

"It rises too late."

“You will want to see something then, and I shall want to see you. I must hear all about that graduation.”

“Mamma expected you to stay; she said she would come down and listen to the music with us.”

Annie's hand was on his arm in the old childish manner; tears were trembling near her eyes. How disappointed the child was!

But he had promised Isobel.

“Good-night, little girl. I will come to-morrow,” he promised, bending to kiss her lips.

“Good-night,” she said, proudly. “I am not such a little girl, now, Prosper, and I do not care about to-morrow.”

All the way home he meditated, and his meditations ended in a sigh. Would Annie keep her promise, now? Had she learned that the breaking was a child's caprice? And he had brought it upon her by that impulsive, unpremeditated leave-taking in that window seat. How it all came back! She remembered it, he had seen it in her eyes.

He would take Isobel, the woman, into the room, and tell her how he had loved Annie, the child. She had been quiet at the supper table; he had spoken twice before she noticed him; was she glad that she was going back to Bel to-morrow? Driv-

ing into the green lane he found Marietta upon the stoop; he tossed the reins to the boy in waiting and sprang out.

"Are you alone?"

"Just alone; Isobel just went in."

There was no need to take her to the window seat, she was there already, sitting on it, leaning back against the folded shutters.

"Here I am back again! What do you think of those old friends of mine? I wanted you to see Annie."

"I never saw such perfection in flesh and blood."

"Neither did I. She has bloomed; she was in bud when I saw her last in Florence."

"Her mother is very much the lady."

"Oh, of course; and she has had good sense in training Annie."

"I wish Bel might see her."

"She will some day. Poor little Bel, how she broke her heart over that unfortunate letter. Will you believe me I was too angry with her to see her afterwards? I left a message. I *was* in a passion."

"*You*," she smiled. "You even-tempered mortal!"

"Are you glad you are going to-morrow?"

"I have been here seven days," she evaded.

"And Bel has written seven times."

He moved up and down; he had picked a bit of the pennyroyal from the bunch on the table, and was holding it between his lips.

"Mr. Devoe is no worse?"

"O, no."

"Why not stay another seven days? Are you like Noah's dove, must you fly back because you can find no place to stay?"

"You are more like the dove; you have something in your bill," with a flash of mischievousness like a girl's.

"You do not answer me."

"I do not want to stay; I want to go home," she cried, as if in sudden pain.

"Are you displeased with me?"

"Not with you, with myself."

"Isobel, I have never said it before—but you know it; I want you all the time—to help me and rest me."

She moved and dropped to the carpet.

"Do not say that; you do not understand. That little girl, she is not a little girl now, is the wife for you; she will grow up with you, and you will

grow alike. I am an old woman compared to her; I am old compared to you—with my life and my hard experiences. Prosper Dekker, I will *never* marry you; Annie Pierrepont is your wife, and she loves you and will understand you and love you better as she grows up to you. I am old enough to be her mother," she said, pitifully.

"You are young to me," he pleaded.

"When you are fifty you will be in your prime; how old I shall be! Past sixty. A woman past sixty is old! A woman past forty is not young. That girl's coming has opened my eyes; the more I love you the more I will not marry you!" she said distinctly and decidedly.

"Isobel, you are wild! you do not know what you are saying," he answered, patiently.

"*You* do not know: but you will know and thank me."

"Listen to me, let me convince you."

"You cannot convince me; I know life better than you. I know you admire me, and you love me because you are interested in me; when your heart was sore for her you found me. Tell me, did not your love come back when you saw her to-day? Did you not forget me wholly for one moment?"

"A moment is nothing," he said impatiently, "you are unreasonable and jealous."

"Yes, I am jealous. I should be jealous of her always. But I am thinking of you. You do not know what you are about, but I know. I know because I am so much older. Shall I take advantage of you? I helped to spoil one man's life; do let me help save another man's."

Her voice was low in its intense pleading; the tears were raining unheeded down her cheeks.

"I have never done anything great or good in my life. I have been all selfish. I know I could not be happy if I did not make you happy; you would be tired of me. I am moody and low spirited, I am not always as you see me. I would rather stay with Bel; she is never disappointed in me, and growing old makes no difference to her. I should wear myself out hating to grow old and in trying to keep young for your sake. Annie will not have to try. It will be more than twenty years before she is as old as I am to-night."

"Isobel, will you not listen to reason? Do you not believe that growing old will only make you more beautiful to me?" he asked, passionately.

"No, I do not believe it. Tell me this; did you

regret just one minute that you had promised to come back to me to-night?"

"That is nonsense," he exclaimed, angrily.

"Prosper," laying her hand upon his arm as Annie had done, "I pray you, tell the truth to me; tell it for truth's sake."

He shook her off and strode out of the room.

She stood one moment, the tears still raining down her cheeks. "I have been brave," she sobbed. And then she went slowly up the seven steps and stood upon the threshold of the queer little room, where, so long and so short a time ago had appeared to her the loveliest vision of girlhood.

The next morning he drove her to the pier and they walked up and down together waiting for the boat.

"Isobel, I did not sleep one hour last night."

"Will you promise me something?"

"Yes," he said, moodily, "if it will make you any happier."

"You are a good man, but you are very human; as human as I am. Will you promise me that you will see Annie Pierrepont as often as you can for a whole year?"

"What for? To what end?"

"That you may learn your own heart."

"I know my own heart."

"After that year is over write or come to me— if you are not bound to her."

"I cannot see her without giving her reason to suppose that I wish to renew the old—

"Then do not go to her until you *do* wish to renew the old friendship. But there she is now! She expects to stay here a month."

"Isobel, you cruelly misjudge me. I will come to you and tell you so. When may I come?"

"In one year or two—when I am one or two years older, and one or two years further removed from you," with something sweet in her bitterness.

"You talk like a woman."

"You will talk like a man when I see you again."

"You are very hard. I am surprised that such hardness is in you."

"I know you are surprised; you did not know me; I did not know myself until last night. It will rest me to go back to the child. Bel has shown me how to be true."

The boat was coming in; a few loiterers had gathered upon the long pier; Annie Pierrepont was standing near them with her face averted, watching the children playing in the surf.

Soon the throng poured off the boat and Prosper and Isobel were lost in the crowd.

"You leave me a miserable man," was his parting words.

Was she a miserable woman? She hardly knew; it was something to be brave and true; it was something to know that if her caprices had helped to spoil one life, her truth and unselfishness were helping to save another from a mistake that would for himself make a long life bitterness. He loved Annie still; she had read it in the youth that came back to his voice; why had he not known it? He *was* a good man, but how human! Was she glad that girl had come in time?

"I am human too," she said, in sorest agony, and hid herself behind her veil. The ladies' cabin was empty; she parted the curtains and went in; with her veil still drawn she sought the farthest corner and sat there the two hours of the trip, not thinking, not feeling.

When was this victory achieved? Not in the one supreme moment in which she had risen above herself, but in the hours of the past two years that she had spent upon her knees.

Those two hours he passed with Annie Pierrepont; wise, tender, playful, abstracted by turns,

never for one moment forgetting the eyes that had hastened to turn away from his; how much misery he had wrought!

Would Perez ever have done such a thoughtless thing?

So self-absorbed he had been that he had forgotten hearts could ache because of him; he had not thought that Annie might grow older and learn how much he was to her; he had not thought but that he could give to this woman, so impulsive and weak, and yet so wise, a heart as satisfied as her own. Had he forgotten the common sense and natural relations of life? Had he expected to forget Annie, the love of many years, so soon? Was he fickle? Was he selfish? To think that God would bless men through such a man as he was proving himself to be! Another night he could not sleep. In his note book he made this entry: "When I say: 'Lord, I have sinned,' he knows just how. When I say: 'Lord, I desire this thing,' he knows if the desire be in my weakness or in my strength. He knows just why. And because he knows just how and just why, he knows just what to do, and just when. Lord, I have been a fool. I am a fool to-night. I know not what to do. Is not thy strength made

perfect in weakness ? Thy wisdom in such folly as mine ?”

The next day was the Sabbath ; he had been invited to preach in the new church in the village ; in the morning he spoke from the words : “O God, thou knowest my foolishness.” Coming out of church, a countryman said to his neighbor : “That was a powerful plain talk to us foolish folks.”

XXXII.

NATURAL HISTORY AND A PROMISE.

"I NEVER *do* know whether it is a mountain or a hill," said Bel, one morning in September.

"O yes you do," answered Perez, encouragingly, "the mountains are the hills *grown up*."

"I shall put that fact in my Natural History; it has nothing to thrive on but your sage observations."

"Bring it to me, I haven't seen it in an age."

"I would rather not. I am ashamed of it."

"Then I shall take it away from you," he threatened.

"I wish you would," she laughed.

Grandfather's chair was near them on the piazza; they sat together on the upper step; the old man smiled at the sound of the happy voices; within the last year his ear had not readily caught words not spoken with clear emphasis. Perez and Bel had now no need to hide themselves in foreign speech.

"Poor grandpapa," said Bel, looking up to return his smile.

"Because he doesn't hear all you say to me? Happy grandpapa," mimicking her tone.

"Perez, I do not like you," with a contradictory sparkle in her eyes.

"And I do not like you. I love you."

"That is nonsense," she rebuked, severely; "open your book again and read sense to me."

"First, I want you to bring your Natural History; it needs correction by this time."

"Perez, you will never make me learned."

"You are already learned; you surpass me in artlessness, you are wise in devices to make me love you better every day—"

"I will go away if you talk any more nonsense."

"You may go and get the book."

"You always have your way," she said, rising with a comical sigh, "some day I shall resist you."

The book was hidden away under a pile of newspapers on the table in the bay window; she brought it with heightened color; she *was* ashamed of it.

"I think it makes people wise to be unhappy," she said, seating herself again at his side. "I am

so happy that I think only of silly things; I haven't said anything wise for a month. Grandpapa has not been cross since I took that long drive with you."

"You must take another to-morrow."

"O no, please; I promised him I would not go again for so long this summer."

"I think I have something to say about that. Isobel, I *own* you; he has not the first right to you."

She did not lift her eyes; she could feel the flash in his eyes; it was not the first time he had compelled her to break her word to her grandfather; he said it would teach her that she had no right to promise; she had no right to give to her grandfather the time that belonged to him.

"But Perez, he is not so well now; the doctor says he may have an attack any day and die; and that is thirty miles, going and coming."

He had taken the book from her hand and was turning the leaves.

"Let us read it together. You will see me charmed, for you are like

'The girl who at each pretty phrase let drop
A ruby comma, or a pearl full-stop,
Or an emerald semicolon.'"

He was not angry; he was never angry, but he was determined. How childish her written words appeared; no wonder he thought he could do as he liked with her; her eyes, rather dimmed, followed the pencilled words.

“Pertaining to Sir Walter Scott: the little dog across the way. He often comes within my half acre. Sir Walter, there is something very Scotch about your bushy eyebrows and the bright eyes under them. Such a dear black nose! and a ruff about your neck, I think you have brought some blood from Skye, because of your funny way of trotting on three legs like Mary Hyde's little Skye. Your trot is a particularly humorous and important one, with steps about three inches long.

“An hour later. I ran over to Miss Jue's with a message from mamma (which message contains no Natural History, and, therefore, cannot be herein recorded) and I dropped two dead grass stalks into her dove cage. (The date is April, and that is why the grass is not fresh. A real Naturalist takes note of dates.) On lifting the lid soon after (for I tarried after my message was delivered) the darling (one of them) stood on the edge of the empty box nest with a bit of the dried grass in its mouth. They are particularly eager to have a nest.

(The same word again—P. says I must not repeat unless repetition strengthens. He repeats *something* every time he comes; does that strengthen?) Evening. Above the line of the low hills the sky is a light faint blue, next comes a broad cloud band. Over the way—(over the way is a part of my half acre now-a-days) the pink-tinted sky forms a background for a small forest of white-blossomed cherry trees.

“Apr. 23 (I will date it this time). All Sir Walter can do is to sniff and try to catch his breath when Norah (that is grandpapa’s hound) rolls him about and twists and turns and kneads him. They are playing out the window where grandpapa can watch.

“Wasps are apt to be ugly. (This morning I counted twenty-seven on the two small windows in the kitchen garret.) They are ugly just because they are such spindly little things in the middle; that is where their heart ought to be and there is not room for it.

“This is not elegant English. Perez says I do not speak as prettily as when I came; my speech has been corrupted; at first it was more like book English, and now it is more colloquial. I catch words from mamma and Aunt Marie. (This is very nat-

ural, although, strictly speaking, not Natural History.)

"I ask grandpapa to look at the clouds; delicate pearl against a light pure blue.

"I do notice nature, since I began this book, as I did not do before. I would rather show this to Perez than to Mr. Ruskin.

"Apr. 26. Dandelions are closing for the night. I wonder why they close when the sun is gone?

"May 9. Sitting in the bay-window. Grandpapa and I seem to live within this half circle. The wind blows—trees, and the grass are of the richest green; the air is overflowing with the gladness of the spring. (So am I.) No clouds. Wavering, quivering shadows on the grass.

"This is compensation for two stormy days. I do not know whether the rainy days are the between times or the sunshiny days. I set out to find some good times in between the hard times; the good times are so long, and the hard times so short.

"A bit of animal life. Sir Walter in the sun, on the piazza (on his own piazza), and Perez whistling as he strides up and down.

"Afternoon. The birds have not sung much to-day; too full for utterance. Grass blades tremble and quiver in the breeze. I believe they are glad

to be alive. I wonder if any living thing is as glad to be alive as I am?

"This morning Aunt Marie sent me to Mary Hyde's, on an errand, and I saw two saucy cat birds in a thicket, and I *think* I saw an oriole. The thrushes are singing.

"What is sweeter than the voice of the evening thrush?

"(Perez says Annie Pierrepont laughs like the evening thrush.)

"Wordsworth's 'There was a time,' fits into this day.

"Perez reads *hours* to grandpapa and me.

"May 17. Light clouds resting in the sky like dainty boats or islands in a sea of blue, some in groups and some alone.

"Perez says that 'some day' he will take me across the sea and show me again the dear old city, and the school where I was so sorrowful; he says it shall be our wedding journey.

"Grandpapa heard him and told him not to put such ideas into my head; that I was happy enough where I am. And I *am*. But I like to think of the sea, and Havre.

"21. I came to the spring to get grandpapa a pail of spring water; I brought my book and pencil.

Our little ducks had run away, and here I found the nineteen little beauties. Did they run and run until they found the water? Nineteen naughty little heads, bright eyes and yellow bills, huddled up together.

"I will not send you back, for I feel as if I had run away too. There is a bird's nest in the grass along the right bank of the brook, so cosy and dainty; the four eggs have brown spots on a blue ground.

"Yesterday Perez brought me a stone broken in two pieces full of the prints of fossilized shells. He found them on our place. A robin just dropped from a hickory branch to the ground. (I know about many trees; my Natural History tutor told me.)

"A woodpecker is investigating the trunks of some hickories for a lunch of worms.

"The sunlight floods the open places and makes shadows in the grove. This grove is a perfect place. Perez and I often come here. (Grandpapa thinks he has to let me come when Perez asks him.) In one corner are two piles of sawn logs. Sam cut the tree down early in the year; he was hunting (grandpapa loves rabbit as well as old Jacob loved his savory meat), and he thought

there was a rabbit in the hole at the base; he tried to smoke him out and so set the tree on fire. It had to come down then. He did not tell grandpapa about burning the tree. The logs look so pretty that I will draw them some time when I can stay longer. (I should not stay now.)

"Below the fence is a swamp; bogs, ferns, trees, bushes. I think grandpapa's toad comes here.

"A dark brown calf is in the field. As far as I can translate her noises she thinks she has lost her mother.

"The sound of the locomotive is away off where Perez takes the train every morning. And now, grandpapa, I will dip my small pail in the spring."

Long before this page was reached, Bel had hidden her face on her grandfather's knee. There were several other pages, and the interested reader finished the last before he tossed the book away.

"There!" exclaimed the author of the *Natural History*, with a relieved breath.

"And now, Puss, about our drive to-morrow."

"It is vacation, and we can go another time," she pleaded, lifting her head.

"I wish to go to-morrow. I have a special rea-

son for taking you to-morrow. I have a surprise for you."

Her eyes brightened. The drive was a perfect pleasure in itself. But the surprise!

"It is the last day of my vacation, too."

"I know it," Bel sighed.

"Do you mean that you do not *wish* to go?"

"You know I wish to go. But I *promised*. Perez, I told him I would not be gone so long again."

"I intend to start early in the morning and drive home after the moon has risen. At the hotel where we took dinner that day I have engaged to meet two or three people. One of them you have long wished to see—one is Prosper."

Her face was hidden again on grandfather's knee; he stroked her hair and smiled. Oh, how disappointed she was! His last day, and the drive, and the surprise.

"Mamma takes such good care of him, now. He would not know the difference if he did not see us.—Oh, I do so wish to go."

"There is no reason why you should not. Your grandfather is too exacting, and it grows upon him because you yield to every whim. It is time for this thing to be stopped."

The face was still hidden, the withered fingers were lovingly stroking the bright hair.

"Children, don't quarrel. Bel Hope, what does he want?"

"Tell him," said Bel's smothered voice.

Perez arose and bent over the old man's chair.

"To-morrow is the last day of my vacation. I want to take Bel away for a long drive to see some friends of mine. Prosper and two friends of his are to meet us."

"She said she would not go again," muttered the old man.

"But she asks you to release her from her promise. She must not promise again without my consent."

"Your consent, young man!" exclaimed grandfather, angrily. "What have you to say about it?"

"O, Perez, what *made* you say that?" cried Bel, distressed. "Now he will never let me go."

"I said it because it was time for it to be said," replied Perez, quietly. "I expect you to be ready at half-past seven to-morrow morning."

"He will not release me," said Bel, rising. "It will make him worse to irritate him. The doctor said he must not be excited."

"We are not exciting him. He is exciting himself."

With which remark Perez gathered his books together, and without a word of parting went his way.

"Bel Hope, you *shall* not go," cried her grandfather, grasping her hand. "Promise me."

"I cannot," said Bel, tearfully. "Perez is angry this time, grandpapa."

"I'll see about that," he muttered. "When I say you shall not go that ends the matter."

His head fell forward on his breast, he gasped for breath.

"Mamma, mamma!" called Bel, in great affright, "come quick and bring the ammonia."

The frightened summons brought Mrs. Kellinger from the sitting-room. The old man had fainted.

"I knew he would," half sobbed Bel. "Perez thinks he does it to have his own way. The doctor said he would die some time."

Before Mary Watts brought her husband, Mrs. Kellinger had lifted his stiffened head. He spoke with difficulty.

"Get me to bed."

"Yes, grandpapa, dear," cried Bel, rubbing his hand. "You are better again."

He smiled, and tried to lift his hand to touch her cheek.

"I will not go, grandpapa. I promise now. We are young, we can wait for our good times."

"Go where, Bel Hope?"

"Anywhere. I will always stay with you."

"I knew you would," with the faintest smile in his eyes.

After he was carried to bed, he lay still, and weak, and smiling.

"Bel Hope said she would not go anywhere," he said, contentedly.

"Where did she want to go?" asked Mrs. Kellinger.

"Off. A long ways. With him."

Standing at his pillow, Bel explained:

"To that hotel again, where the falls are—you know I went last week. Mr. Prosper is to meet—was to meet us there with two friends. Do you know who the friends are?"

Did she know who the friends were? It was a month since she had left him on the pier, and this was the first news she had had. She had asked no questions, and neither of his cousins had alluded to his doings. Miss Jue had spoken once of Annie Pierrepont.

"I think,"—she was closing the blinds—"I think it is Annie Pierrepont and her mother."

"O, mamma! And I might see *her*!"

It would be one of her dreams coming true.

"But why do you think so? Mr. Prosper never talks about her."

"He has spoken of her to me. I did not tell you," giving the blind a pull, "I saw her while I was away."

"And you didn't tell me! Was she beautiful?"

"I would rather you would judge for yourself."

XXXIII.

CHOOSING.

THAT evening Miss Jue's step was in the hall. Mrs. Kellinger's first impulse was to flee. All day she had felt that she must hide somewhere. But who knew, who could know her secret beside God, to whom all hearts were opened?

"How is the old gentleman to-night?" Miss Jue whispered, solemnly. "When Mary came over for the mustard she thought he had had a fit. I was away or I should have come immediately. Perez gave me no satisfaction; he never does; he never thinks people are sick until they are dead, and he says *this* attack is nothing but a fit of temper."

Mrs. Kellinger was standing with her hand upon the door knob. She felt that she needed its support.

"How pale you look!" Miss Jue rattled on in a louder whisper. "You look as though you had had a fit yourself. I should think you *would* be

frightened. I came over to see if I might sit up or do something to-night. Perez wouldn't come. I told him it was more a man's place than mine. But how *is* the old gentleman?"

"Very weak."

"He always is, isn't he?"

"He is weaker than usual; every excitement leaves him weaker."

"I don't see what there is to excite *him*; you keep every breath away from him."

"He has been slightly delirious; he thought Bel was Hope—her mother, and it was piteous to see him cling to her and beg her not to go."

"I should think so," said Miss Jue, sympathetically. "I should think it would teach her a lesson."

"Who? Bel?" in evident surprise.

"Why, yes, not to leave him as she does! And that drive to-morrow to meet Prosper and the Pierreponts. Perez is *determined* not to give it up, says Prosper will be there and it is a surprise for both girls."

"I think Bel has given it up."

"I am relieved to hear it. I was so afraid the poor old gentleman would die some time while she's away: yesterday Perez took her down to our

spring and I was in an agony all the time. But she doesn't seem to care for him as she did, I notice, and I don't wonder that it grieves the old man. Would you like to have me stay? I am considered a good nurse."

If this loud whisper were evidence of her qualifications, and loud whispering were a qualification, she certainly was a good nurse, thought her listener, with rasped nerves.

"*You* look worn out; I can stay with Bel. You have looked worn out for a month; I never saw a person change so in one month; I told Perez that your hair must grow white in the night, for it was certainly whiter every morning. Although perhaps you have been coloring it all along."

"No," smiled Mrs. Kellinger, with a touch of self-compassion, "nature kept it colored for me."

"Is there anything *else* I can do?"

The whisper had burst into her usual shrill soprano, and she had twitched off her sun bonnet.

"Miss Jue, I was just thinking, no one would think you had ever been a teacher."

"Because I have lost all my particular ways?"

The pleading murmur from grandfather's room reached them, and then Bel's voice in quieting reply.

"Thank you, I do not think we need you; Sam is within call and he misses Bel if she leaves the room. I will sleep on the sofa in the sitting-room, and Bel will sit in a comfortable chair by the bedside: we will exchange as we can. I suppose Marietta can be spared."

"I should think so. I imagine Prosper is with the Pierreponts most of the time. Did Perez tell you? He has a call to that church, half a mile from his house, nearer the shore, and has about decided to accept. But the letter came to-night, so how could he? So I suppose he 'll be married and settle down; it seems sudden, but he has always known Annie Pierrepont."

The hand upon the door-knob rested heavily.

"I will come in and sit with you. Illness makes a house seem big and lonesome."

"O no, thank you; not if you are busy."

"I brought my work. I thought it would keep me awake if I had to sit up."

Mrs. Kellinger threw the sitting-room door open, and Miss Jue and her sun-bonnet and her roll of towels to be hemmed entered in and took possession. She seemed to take possession of every room she entered.

Grandfather was quiet. Bel was singing:

“Jesus, lover of my soul.”

The lamp in the inner room was placed on the carpet, where it would not disturb the wide open eyes upon the pillow.

Mrs. Kellinger had been lying on the sofa in the dark.

The light from the hall streamed in; but the room was not lighted sufficiently for Miss Jue to unroll her work.

The two women sat upon the sofa, talking in low tones. Mrs. Kellinger was simply replying. She thought she would be willing to live on bread and water for the rest of her days if her companion would only stop talking and go away.

The dark and the sofa was all she wanted in the world.

“Shall you preserve your quinces this year, or do you prefer jelly? *We prefer jelly.*”

“I haven’t thought,” was the dull reply.

“I always think and plan ahead. I suppose I learned system in teaching. My breakfasts, suppers and dinners are planned ahead for a week, always. Are you as systematic as that?”

“I am not systematic at all.”

“I thought so; but you always wash Mondays and sweep Fridays. Your woman is systematic.”

"Is she?" was the absent-minded answer.

"Marietta was. I wonder if she will stay after Prosper is married? I imagine that flighty, travelled young thing knows no more of housekeeping than a butterfly. What kind of a minister's wife will she make?"

"She has all her life to learn in."

"But other people can't wait all *their* lives for her to learn."

"Mr. Dekker will make a good teacher," was the forced reply, after a pause.

"Oh, he will think her perfection."

The light from the hall lamp fell upon Miss Jue's face. The other face was in the shadow.

"Young people now-a-days have everything their own way. Prosper might have chosen discreetly."

"And Perez, too," said Bel's mother, with a dismal laugh.

"Oh, I am reconciled to that. I had to be. But we get pushed aside. What account are you and I beside these young things?"

"Bel cares for me as much as I want her to," said Mrs. Kellinger, spiritedly.

"I didn't mean that. I meant in the eyes of the world."

"The eyes of the world are not upon me," with another laugh.

"When these boys are married, you and I will have no consideration. Every marriage makes a heart ache to somebody, I really believe. I would like to write a book upon *that* side of the question. Wouldn't you?"

"No, it would be too sad," said Mrs. Kellinger, unguardedly.

"There! I knew you felt as I do, with all your keeping up."

"I do not feel as you do. I love to see young girls grow up to happiness. I only hope they will not throw their chances away. I believe every woman has some chance to be good and happy, even if many things are against her."

"These girls haven't anything against them."

In her heart Isobel Kellinger thanked God that this thing was true.

"Prosper and Annie have had a separation; but perhaps they had to have, to learn how to behave to each other. *Our* lovers have run smooth, so far."

"Bel would never be capricious. She understands herself."

The step on the piazza entered the hall. Perez stood in the doorway of the sitting-room.

"Will you ask Bel to come here, Mrs. Kellinger?"

Listening as her mother went to her, he heard the whisper, but not the words of Bel's reply.

"Bel Hope! Who wants you?" demanded the old man, in a grumbling voice.

"Perez. Just a moment, grandpapa. I will come back in two minutes."

"He is always wanting you. I'll be dead and out of your way soon. Old folks are always in some young folks' way," he whined.

Perez stepped forward to meet her and drew her out into the hall. The light as she stood under it, fell upon a pale face and anxious eyes.

"He's very ill, Perez."

"His voice sounds strong enough. He will be up as usual to-morrow."

"The doctor says he is much weaker than from the last attack."

"He always rallies. He has a constitution of iron. In two or three days he will be on the piazza again."

Bel looked doubtful.

"I wanted to speak about to-morrow. If you sit up all night how will you look and feel?"

"I have done it before."

"But I want you to look your brightest to-morrow."

"But, Perez," entreatingly, "you do not expect me to leave grandpapa."

"I most certainly do. Your mother can wait upon him. You said yourself that she was a good nurse."

Her eyes were full of troubled tears.

"But he misses me. He misses me if I stir. Sometimes he thinks I am mamma, my own mamma. He has never lost his mind like this."

"He is confused and half asleep. It is natural at his age. I wish you to go. Please say no more about it."

"Perez, you are cruel; you are heartless."

He frowned and turned away; then he turned back and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"I wish you to go. Do you care for my wishes?"

"Yes, when they are not cruel and selfish and heartless. He may die while I am gone."

"He didn't die the last time he had a fit of ill-temper," said Perez, harshly.

"He is not ill-tempered; he is too old and weak to reason; he is like a little child, and the doctor says we must treat him so."

"Children are made to obey."

She moved away from the touch of his hand.

"I must go to him; do you hear him calling?"

"Isobel, listen to me; I wish you to go, he wishes you to stay; choose between us to-night, once and forever. I have had enough of this nonsense."

She lifted her eyes and looked straight into his; her eyes were cold and hard, his were flashing hot gleams of suppressed anger.

"Then I *do* choose between you; you are selfish, and cruel, and heartless; he is old and weak and dying—he cannot have me very long, and no one can take my place—when I go he loses mamma and me both. You and I are young, we can have good times all our life. I choose between you, and I choose—*him*," she cried, rapidly and passionately.

He did not seem to see the white, cold, proud face; he lifted his hand as if he would push her from him. Suppressing the cry upon her lips she fled up the stairway. He stood a moment as if he had not power to move, then he went heavily out.

"Bel Hope, sing to me again," moaned the old man.

Bel came at her mother's summons; the words of the hymn faltered upon her lips.

“Mamma, sing,” she faltered, “my heart is breaking.”

All the night through the old man slept; Bel wept and dozed in her chair; her mother, sleeping and waking, lay upon the sofa.

He awoke as the birds were ushering in the dawn, and spoke with renewed strength; “I am better, Bel Hope.”

“Yes, grandpapa dear,” she said, wearily.

When Perez and his sister drove away, Bel and her grandfather were sitting on the piazza; she trembled as she leaned upon the back of his chair; the sunlight was dimmed and grandfather’s voice sounded as if coming through waves of thickness.

“Good! He has gone without you; I trusted you, Bel Hope,” cried grandfather, in a weak triumphant voice.

Miss Jue smoothed the duster over her lap, and then she had her say; she had been burning to have it ever since she had heard every word last night.

“Perez, that girl over there is brave and true, and you *are* cruel and hard. She is made of the right stuff, and if you have lost her you have lost something worth having. I shouldn’t think she would ever forgive you; *I* couldn’t.”

He gave the horse a touch with the whip.

"The old man is as well as usual this morning; I knew it was a passing excitement; if this is to be kept up another year it is time for a stop to be put to it. One year has been enough for me; she belongs to *me*, or she belongs to him."

"She belongs to *him*," said Jue, in her quietest, hardest manner, "and I always told you so."

XXXIV.

CONFESSION.

AMONG the groups on the long piazza of the Mountain House, early that morning, were Prosper Dekker and Annie Pierrepont.

"It is not the first time we have seen the sun rise together, Nannie."

"We have often seen it set. I like the sunrise better, because it is the beginning. Don't you? You know I am only the beginning."

"Of a sunshiny day for me!"

"I hope so," she replied, her merry eyes shadowed. "I made it so dark one time for you."

Drawing her arm within his, he led her down the steps to the broad path. This path wandered off into a narrower one, and that into one where only two might walk together.

"Is the grass too damp for you?"

"You are always so practical," she laughed. "I have on my heavy shoes. With all your poetical air you are immensely and intensely practical."

The light words were lost upon him. His eyes were stern and fixed, and his voice tense in its self-control.

"Nannie, I have a story to tell you. You will be shocked, and it may turn you against me. I shall not blame you. I deserve it. You believe me strong and wise. I am weak and foolish."

She was keeping her dress from brushing against the shrubbery. At his words she dropped the white folds and clasped his arm with both hands.

"You have been strong and wise to me, ever since I can remember."

"You are such a child," he said, fondly. "You believe in me with all your faithful heart. That time in Florence when I gave you up, I believed that I had given up all hope of love and marriage and a home of my own. I thought I should go on my way alone, seeking nothing but work and enjoying nothing else. Other men had lived strong self-denying lives, wholly devoted to teaching men the will of God, and I thought a new consecration had been given to me. I gave you up, not as though you were dead, for then I might have thought of you, but as though you were living and would surely belong to some one else. I dared not

even speak your name in my prayers, and I missed you there as much as anywhere."

"O Prosper," with a sob and a drooping of the head. "I know I shouldn't have been a bit good without you."

"It was my selfish impulse that bound you. I pitied you, poor little dove. Then I went out in the world strong in myself—feeling as strong and sure of myself as Paul was of himself—nothing would move me away from my work.

"I despise myself. You cannot despise me as much. I met a woman older than I am, beautiful, and in penitence and sorrow, and I was surprised into a growing interest in her. I saw that I was giving her a new life; that through me, she hoped everything for herself; and I had lost you. And I was weak, and I showed in many ways that I loved her. I never told her so, but I gave her opportunities of showing how she cared for me—"

Annie interrupted: half in petulance half in earnest.

"How could she help it?"

"I could have helped it. And when you came back, and I felt that you had grown into all I had believed you would grow into, and ten times more, my blind eyes were opened wide and I saw I had

loved her only as a friend, an older sister, who was in trouble and whom I had comforted. That first night I saw you, I asked her to become my wife—"

The hold on his arm tightened, and her face lost all its color.

"But she saw through me, and refused me. She said I loved you and must go back to you."

"And is *that* why you came?" in a smothered voice.

"*Is* it? Don't you know better, foolish Nannie?"

"But I can't see yet what you have done that is so wrong."

"Can you not see that I have made her unhappy?"

"Do you mean your housekeeper's sister? Why, she is almost as old as mamma!"

"Do you think hearts grow old?"

"I hope mine will not."

"I cannot forgive myself. I feel that I should not be here with you. I have no right to be happy. I should be punished for my weakness and selfishness."

"Haven't you been? Haven't you been unhappy?"

"I hope you will never know how unhappy."

"Then don't be punished any more. Be happy now with me."

"But how can I atone? What can I do for her?"

"I think she was wrong, too. She is so old. She might know you couldn't forget me, even if I had been so bad. She had no right to care for you, excepting as mamma does. She has her daughter to think about! Hasn't she anything to do beside—"

"She will find something to do."

"Mamma does ever so many things. I think she is a very weak woman," with angry impatience.

"Was she weak, Annie, when she sent me back to you? If she had accepted me I should not have been here with you."

"She had no *right* to accept you," said Annie, indignantly.

"A weaker woman would! I want you to understand how strong and unselfish she was. There is more than the germ of a brave woman in her. Her life has been against her. Everything in your life has tended to your growth in beautiful things. She has had to go back and begin. You have her to thank that my weakness has not spoiled your life, and mine, and her own. A second rate hap-

piness might have been given to all of us. Now we have the first and best."

"Won't she have something?" sobbed penitent Annie.

"I think a great deal will be given her. One never loses by being true. God knows how to work our mistakes into his plan for us. His strength shines glorious through the veil of our weakness. And, now do *you* forgive me?"

She lifted her face in unspoken assurance and he kissed her lips.

"I am glad you told me," she said very gravely. "That you thought I was *worth* being told."

XXXV.

A WEEK.

THE shadows of the leaves were quivering on the grass, the hot September noon was at its height ; grandfather sat in his chair on the piazza, refusing to be pushed into the hall, saying fretfully that he must be out of doors, where he could catch his breath.

It was Saturday, and a week since Bel had stood at her grandfather's side and heard the sound of carriage wheels as Perez and Miss Jue drove away.

A week of days and nights, in which he had not come to her and she had not gone to him ; could she confess herself in the wrong when she was not in the wrong ?

Would he ever find himself wrong ? She wondered and waited. Again and again she assured herself that he was cruel and heartless, that she could not love him when he treated her so, that

she did not love him, that if he did come back and ask for the old bond to be renewed she would say: "I am disappointed in you; you are not *my* Perez Dekker; I do not love you."

Every day grandfather asked where Mr. Dekker was; was he always in the city?

To-day, as the Saturday morning passed and did not bring him, he reiterated the question.

"Grandpapa," said Bel, "he is not coming again."

"Not coming *again*," he repeated, "is he offended?"

"Yes."

"He is very touchy then."

A sad smile flitted over the girl's pale face.

"I suppose you don't care," he said, reassuredly.

"Yes, grandpapa, dear, I *do* care."

"Is that why you are so dead-and-alive, and will not sing to me?"

"I cannot sing."

"Pooh! pooh!"

He raised his head to look up into her face: "Bel Hope, what ails you?"

"Nothing," she said, with a contradictory trembling of the lip.

"Then something ails *me*; I missed something, I thought it was you."

"I am always here," she said, with unconscious bitterness.

"It takes a long time for a thought to get through my thick head. I am here and I am not here; now I am here and you are Bel Hope; I would like to see Mr. Perez Dekker while I am here."

"What for?"

"I have something to say to him."

"What about—me!" she said hurriedly, "you must not speak to him about me."

"I shall do as I like. Go and bring Mr. Perez Dekker."

"Grandpapa dear," she pleaded, "let me take you in. The sun is too hot for you."

"Nothing is too hot for me; bring Mr. Perez Dekker, I say."

"To-morrow—perhaps he will come. I think every day he will come."

"He will come if you go for him. Go."

"I cannot."

"You must. Somebody must!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "I will go myself."

Mrs. Kellinger came up the steps with a bowl of ice cream.

"Take it quick, grandfather! Miss Jue sent it over."

"I will not touch it! I will not eat or drink or sleep until I have seen Mr. Perez Dekker."

Bel gave her mother an appealing glance.

"Run away," Mrs. Kellinger said, in a low tone, "he will have to come. He looks purple, don't you see? I left him on the piazza, he started to come with me, then excused himself."

"How does he—"

"He is acting about as silly as you are, Miss Jue says."

Bel turned and went in; there was no refuge like her own small chamber; if she heard his voice could she hold herself back from flying down to him?

"Isobel, go for him," commanded the old man.

She ran across the road and called to him.

"Is the old man worse?" he asked, hastening toward her.

"He is failing every day—he must see you; he would make me come."

He followed her slowly. She was not sure whether or not it were reluctantly. There was no flutter of white or blue or pink upon the piazza. The old man in his calico gown leaned forward, his hands folded upon the top of his cane.

"You have done well to come," he greeted, harshly. "Where have you been all this time?"

"As usual, at home and at college."

He took off his hat and did not replace it; he dropped it upon the floor of the piazza, and seated himself on the topmost step.

"How do you do to-day?" he asked, easily.

"About as usual. I don't get no worse and no better. I want to know why you haven't been here to see Bel Hope?"

With the thoughtfulness of a nurse Mrs. Kellinger had taken the bowl of ice cream to the cellar and placed it in the refrigerator.

"I am glad there is always something to be done," she said, half aloud. "I am glad I can do such things, if nothing better."

The young man twirled his hat upon his fingers.

"I have not come to see her because she does not wish me to come," he replied, deliberately.

"Did she say so?"

"Yes."

"How did she say it?"

"She said it seriously—sincerely. She chose between us, and she chose you."

"I wish she would," said the old man with the glimmer of a smile. But you needn't tell me so, it isn't nature! You don't believe it no more than I do."

"I am willing to take her word for it."

"You provoked her to it; my gentle lamb."

"She provoked *me*."

"You have had time enough to cool off. Don't you two go to quarrelling about an old man like me! I aint worth it. She may choose to stay with me now because she will have enough of you one of these days when I ain't here to keep you apart."

Perez twirled his hat. There was nothing to reply to this.

"Go and find her and tell her you have been a fool, and you are sorry for it. I aint agoing to let her go running off with you whether she wants to or don't want to; but you shan't break her heart and make her as white as a sheet, and take all the sweetness out of her, just because you've got a quick temper and a jealous disposition. Now is *my* time, young man, and don't you go and spoil *your* good time that is ahead by having ugliness to repent of. Do you believe that I lay awake nights, old as I am, thinking of hard words and hard looks I gave to a woman before you was born? Well, sir, I do. And it don't pay, anyhow. She had her will and her temper, and I had mine. We both were proud; and poor little Bel Hope is proud with

her heart aching. I never thought you was worthy of her, no man is. But if you want to be, go and find her and tell her you will never break her heart again."

Perez arose. His words seldom came impulsively, but he took the limp chilly hands and held them fast.

"We will both be kind to you," he said. "She told the truth. I *was* selfish and cruel."

At first Bel would not answer the summons upon the stairs; at the third call she opened the door and came to the head of the stairs; in an instant he held her in his arms.

"I am so sorry," she said, between laughing and crying.

"I was a bear and I have been one the whole week."

"I think you *are*," she laughed, struggling in the close pressure of his arms, "let me go."

He bore her in triumph down to her grandfather; the old man's face was radiant; Bel whispered to Perez that it was "glorified."

"I want you to take good care of her; I hold a mortgage, remember, but I give up my right the day I die," said grandfather, weakly joyful.

"Some one else holds a mortgage," cried a hap-

py voice behind them, "and she never gives up her right. Perez, it is too bad for you to come into such a mortgaged property."

"It is too good for me," he said, contritely, pressing the fingers he was keeping on his arm.

That evening, as they walked together in the twilight, Bel said: "Perez, I want to promise you something," (grandfather had sent them off). "I will never again let my wicked pride come between you and me."

"And I want to promise you something, Isobel. I will never again be quick and passionate and greedy of my rights—and if I am, being so weakly human—"

But her fingers were over his lips.

"I think my heart would have broken in another week," she said, with starting tears.

"It is pleasant to know how long it would take to break your heart."

"Hear them laugh!" cried grandfather. "Isobel, you may fix my drops; I don't believe you will poison me."

Mrs. Kellinger poured the drops into a small glass and went out to the kitchen for cool water; she said afterward that she lingered to look out into the night, but that it could not have been five

minutes before she returned; she spoke as she entered the dimly lighted room and then stood at his side with the drops in the cool water. His head often drooped forward as he sat thinking, or in a reverent tone, "praying," and she touched his head, saying: "Grandfather!" Then, in a louder voice: "Grandfather, it is time to take your drops."

He made no motion; her shriek brought the two from the piazza. He was taken to his room and laid upon his bed; there was little evidence that he lived for three weeks. In the fourth week, without one spoken word, he ceased to breathe. "Poor grandpapa! *dear* grandpapa!" cried Isobel, with tears, kissing his cold fingers, "you loved me only too much."

XXXVI.

AT MADAME'S.

AGAIN the afternoon sun streamed in at the four long windows; Madame's windows were still the sunniest that looked out upon the square; the uncarpeted floor was illuminated in patches and the stone steps caught the glow through the open doorway.

The girl at the window in her white dress with the knot of rose color at her throat (Perez liked nothing so well as her white and rose color) had more than a faint rose tint in her cheeks to-day; she would not say this afternoon as she had said, (how many years before?) "I do not see what I was made at all for,"—for she had seen.

The placid voice that spoke now and then was as placid as ever, and the busy fingers as busy; she chirped to her canary in intervals of talk; the conversation was still in snatches.

The band was playing martial music. But Iso-

bel was only half listening to the music. She was watching for somebody. Not for the stout gentleman with the sea-browned and sun-burned face, or the two oddly dressed girls—how queer it was! She was watching for Perez Dekker, the young man with the sharp black eyes and long hair, the young man she did not like—for Perez Dekker, her husband—the husband of a whole month.

She laughed aloud as she put it to herself—the man she did not like—her husband!

“You have not told me about that strange America, Bel.”

“I know so little about it. I never travelled anywhere. I did not once take a journey until we began our wedding journey.”

“You have not told me about your grandfather, the old man you hated to go to.”

“Dear old grandpapa,” murmured Isobel.

“Was he kind to you?”

“He was more than kind—he loved me.”

“You have not told me about your father.”

“I never saw papa again. He died—he was lost overboard. It was not a storm, but he was lost.”

“And your mother?”

“O, mamma! I never can tell you about mamma.”

"Is she as beautiful as ever?"

"More beautiful," exclaimed Bel, enthusiastically. "Her hair is quite white, and that softens her like old lace. She is not as gay, but we love her the better for that. She changed after poor papa was lost."

"She was so young, I thought she would not—I thought she might marry," said Madame, trying to speak guardedly.

"Mamma! Oh, she would never think of it. No one ever thought of it. She wears her black dresses and her widow's cap. I could not think of it, it would spoil her. Miss Jue,—Perez says I must say sister Jue,—spoke of it one day. She says what no one else dares to say, and mamma looked so white and said so sharply: 'Hush, Miss Jue,' that I am sure she will not dare again. It was the day, I remember so well, that Mr. Prosper, cousin Prosper, came and brought Annie, his wife, his beautiful wife. I suppose Miss Jue thought it was a time to speak of such things. It was when he came to marry me.

"We were married in grandpapa's sitting-room. I wanted it to be there, for I felt as if grandpapa was in his chair blessing us. He was so kind the last time he spoke to me—almost a year before."

"Had you a large party?" asked Madame, with interest.

Madame's fingers paused over her work. Now and then Bel glanced out into the Square.

"O no, indeed,—so few. Aunt Marie and mamma, and Janet and Ellinor, were all the friends I had; and Perez wanted no one beside his sister and Mr. Prosper and his wife. We had refreshments under the trees; no servants to wait on us, for Janet and Ellinor asked if they might be the waiters, and Aunt Marie directed them. It was all so delightful. Annie Pierrepont was as merry as a witch, and Perez was wild to say comical things. Prosper was quiet, and so was mamma, for mamma was losing me; and Prosper was the minister, and he never is funny now-a-days. Miss Jue was grim once in a while, but she was not cross."

"Where will your mother stay?"

"At grandpapa's, with Aunt Marie. There was money to be paid, and Perez paid it. He says I own the farm. But I told mamma it was hers as long as she lives. She has planned to be so busy, she and Aunt Marie. It does not seem like mamma to care to do such things. She is not like herself. Not as you knew her. She is lovelier than herself."

"If I had thought, that night in church, that that man would marry you," began Madame, in a tone solemn to awfulness.

"What would you have done?" laughed Bel.

"I wouldn't have believed it."

"I am glad I did not know it. I am glad I did not know anything of what would happen to me. Perez says I want to know the end of everything: and I did once. But I think it is so much more beautiful to have your life open day after day."

"Open to blackness and disappointments?" asked Madame.

"It does sometimes. But I forget that now. I have forgotten all those dreadful things I used to die about. I seem to think the good times have been always; all the between times have been delightful, and the hard times so soon over. I do not know which the between times have been, they have all been blessed times," said Bel, in her happy voice.

"I meant the good times, when nothing happened—between the times of trouble."

"But the times of trouble have been so good! Such good times came out of them."

Madame gazed at her with uncomprehending eyes.

"I wish I could say that," sobbed Madame. "Lizette's baby has died, and her husband, when he is at home, is ill-tempered, and her mother is as cross as two sticks. They are still in the rooms below, but they do not pay their rent regularly."

"Poor things," said Bel's sympathetic voice.

"And Mademoiselle has lost the use of one of her eyes; and her father is bed-ridden. The school is given up."

"Then I cannot show it to Perez. I wanted him to see that school room, and my desk by the window," said Perez's wife, disappointed. "I must go to see Mademoiselle; even if she cannot see me. He will laugh at me, and I could never show him—never that swan's nest among the reeds." She quoted from a poem Perez loved to read to her.

"She frets and worries and frets her old father," said Madame, who did not catch the meaning of Bel's quotation.

"I am so sorry; he never was nice like grand-papa."

For an instant Bel's face was clouded.

"You could not expect not to find changes."

"But I wanted to find pleasant changes."

"Mademoiselle does not need to be fretful; her

brother has come from America with money; she does not look on the happy side, and I tell her so. You could rake up some trouble, if you should try, couldn't you?"

Bel thought a moment. "Going back to live with Miss Jue frightens me; but I will be over the way from mamma. Perez is always on my side. No, I do not think I have a trouble in the world. I told Perez I am afraid I shall be sharp to his sister, and he laughed and said it would not hurt her."

"Remember she is old," cautioned Madame, "and she has not all you have to be happy with."

"She has more than you have," said Bel, quickly. "I do not know how to love her; I am not glad when she comes into the room. The day we were married she told me that Perez and I would have our black times, she knew him better than I did, and I must yield or he would look at me as he did at her, and I must *not* yield, for that would encourage his selfishness!"

"Men are natural creatures," said Madame, "my experience is that love doesn't hurt them, and showing love doesn't hurt them either. When I look back—" she sighed, and took off her glasses to wipe them, "all I wish is that I had known that then as I know it now."

"There he is," said the joyful voice at the window, and Bel's happy feet tripped over the sun-lighted stone steps.

"I wish I could begin over again," said the placid old voice, "*she* will never have to wish that; America has been a good place for her."

Two days more in Havre, and then Mr. and Mrs. Perez Dekker sailed for America.

"Perez," said Bel, the day they reached home, "I am so glad you took me; but I did not find myself there—or you; we were almost two other people."

XXXVII.

SEVEN YEARS.

IN the long apartment we saw for the first time that chilly afternoon in late August, when old Malt stretched himself in dozing solitude by the fire, we find Isobel Dekker.

It is seven years since that afternoon, still the room has few changes, for Miss Jue herself has not changed, and does not believe in changes.

Old Malt—and he is five years older, is as much at home as ever; the wicker-work basket stands on precisely the same spot in the carpet; the green shelves are filled with plants and there are yellow bells on the arbutilon; the lounging chairs are not shabby to-day, Perez had insisted upon having them richly upholstered; the brown and gray table cover had given place to crimson; the two book cases are still crowded with the old books, and the latest in science and literature were still scattered about.

Anastasia, seven years more infirm, still raised her cracked voice in hymns of solemn sound; a middle-aged woman of cheerful aspect stepped briskly around the kitchen, taking advice and reproof with unflagging good humor.

"I would stay for Mrs. Dekker and the babies, if Stasia and Miss Jue were ten times themselves," she said to Mrs. Kellinger.

Baby Julie was something past two years old, and baby Kellinger something past two months. When the little girl came, and the name was talked about between the proud father and happy mother, and Perez magnanimously proposed "Isobel Devoe," Bel had spoken quickly and with tears very near:

"Of course I would like that best; better than Hope Devoe, for mamma's sake; but there is some one else, Perez. Jue does not grow happier all the time as we do. She is so poor and we are so rich. I would like to name baby for her and call her Julie."

"You blessed little mother!" exclaimed Perez.

And then, when Miss Julie had a baby brother, Perez was more magnanimous still, and proposed "John Kellinger," remembering that his wife had said one day: "I never did one thing for poor papa. I did not even love him."

If the step-mother felt aggrieved that Miss Jue might hold the "real Dekker" baby in her arms and say to strangers that it was named for herself, she was more than repaid when to the blue-eyed boy was given the name she still held in remorseful remembrance.

This afternoon, late in August, but neither chilly nor rainy, although Miss Jue has potted her plants and brought them in; there are footsteps and laughter in the room that old Malt held that day in sole possession. The door leading into the next room is wide open, disclosing sunshine and pretty things in the way of furnishing. This room Perez calls his wife's boudoir, but she more correctly terms it the Nursery.

Grandmamma is sure to find the children there, even when taking their morning or afternoon naps, and mamma is always with them.

"When your grandfather was alive I had a rival," Perez had declared that day, "and now I have two."

"It is too bad I have not any," returned Bel.

"You never will have, my wife," said Perez.

"Not even when Kelly goes to College? Not even when he becomes famous? Not even when Julie is a beauty?"

“Not even when my wife grows older every day and sweeter every day, not even—”

“And more educated every day,” said Isobel, with a laugh. “Oh, what *is* becoming of my education?”

He held her at arms length, regarding her seriously:

“Have you practiced to-day?”

“No, sir,” throwing her head back in radiant defiance.

“Or read?”

“Not one word.”

“Because Kelly cries or Julie must have a new dress?”

“Is that sufficient reason?”

“He may better cry for you now than cry by-and-bye, because he is growing away from his mother; and Julie may better have one pretty the less that her mother may understand the books she loves by-and-bye, when she comes home from Vassar.”

“Perez, I do think about that.”

“I want the mother of my children to be something beside their nurse, little woman. Grown up boys and grown up girls expect a great deal of their mothers in this nineteenth century. Our

children must not be disappointed in father or mother."

"I shall *love* them enough."

"Loving is much, and nothing is of any worth without it. But it does not hurt love to be expressed in excellent English, or to have the variety that an intelligent appreciation of the lessons of the day give it. I want you to know who is making new discoveries in France, and fighting in Russia, exploring in Africa, navigating in the Northern seas—"

"The Sea of Tranquillity, the Sea of Clouds, and the Mid-Moon Bay?" she smiled, mischievously.

"I am not afraid for you," he said seriously. "Only please remember that what we may do any time we are apt to do in no time; and your study time is when the babies are asleep."

"Both of them? One usually stays awake to awaken the other. I wish you had been here this morning. Kelly was screaming with pain, and Julie was screaming with rage. She was crying because I would not let her hold him. She seemed to think she could quiet him sooner than I could."

"That was when she should have been punished!"

"O, I punished her," said Bel. "I am very

strict. Mamma says I am too strict. I told her that if she did not stop crying she should not hold him at all to-day."

"Did she stop?"

"Not instantly."

"She should have stopped instantly. That was not obedience."

"I never stop instantly. She has inherited that among other evil tendencies from the maternal side of the house. If every child is a bundle of his ancestors—"

The laughing face was brought near enough to be kissed; and then the busy mother had to promise that she would read "two pages worth reading every day before dinner."

"The children's faces are pages worth reading," she said, as soon as she could slip from his arms.

"I want the mother's face to be a page worth reading, too," he retorted.

And then, as Julie was in the garden with Aunt Jue, and Kelly asleep in his crib, she read for an hour the last new book he had brought home.

Prosper Dekker was right when he said that Perez would educate his wife. Bel was not

always sure that she liked the educating process; but she was always sure that she liked her husband.

“Isobel,” he said one day, “what did you get by marrying me?”

“I got *you*,” was the quick reply.

XXXVIII.

TWO WIVES AND TWO MOTHERS.

THIS same afternoon in August, when Isobel and her children were laughing and playing in the nursery, Prosper Dekker and his wife were sitting together in their shady parlor. She was perched on the window seat and he was sitting below her. There were lines of thought in his serious face, and with the grace of womanhood had come to her its thoughtfulness. The secret of her sweetness and grace, was the two small graves in the graveyard near the church. The secret of his strong manliness and whole-hearted consecration to his work was his daily increasing love to Christ.

“Annie, dear wife, you are as precious to me as the blood of my heart; but I love the will of Christ more than I love you.”

“I know it,” she said: “and I am glad.”

“Is that true of you, also?”

“No. I love you better.”

"You will be brought to it; you are in the right way."

"I am willing to be led."

"And you are willing for me to give up our pleasant home here, and the people who love you so much, to seek a new home and new work."

"Yes, if I may go, too."

"Some one else can do the work here; but everyone is not as willing as I am to go among the Chinese."

"O Prosper!" with involuntary appeal. "Not to China!"

"O no, faint heart; only across this continent. I wish to take a trip with you down the Columbia River. I want to show you Mount Hood and Multwomah Falls."

"I never heard of them."

"No, you lady of European travel, you do not know enough of your own land to talk of it abroad. We will take another wedding journey. And then we must go to San Francisco. I want to do something for the Mongolians. How that reminds me of dear old Mr. Devoe. He called himself an old Mongol. The Presbyterian Mission among the Chinese is the oldest on the coast. It is one of the results of the love of gold. The quest of gold drew

the Americans to that coast, and it brought the Chinamen; it led to the opening of Japan. Think of a greed for gold being the means of answering the prayer that a door might be opened to the Mongolians.

“I have been reading a most interesting account of a visit to the Mission. One Sunday, the writer states, during his stay, a Chinese woman and her child had been baptized. Her husband had been a Christian for years; and had prayed for his wife and labored to bring her to the truth. When a son was given them, he had urged her to bring it for baptism; but the hold of heathenism was too strong upon her. Then the second child came, and he stood up alone and had it baptized. And then a little girl was given them, and now he had the joy of bringing wife and child together for baptism. There is a Chinese husband for you.”

“Perez, you have been like that—and a thousand times more to me. I wonder if God lets them keep their little ones.”

“My darling!” was his only reply, as he passed his arm about her.

The second grave was but three weeks old; little Annie had died after the brief illness of twenty-four hours; Perez, the first born, was old enough to

dig in the sand and to help mamma water her flowers.

“I will go with you—any time.”

“We are as near the children there.”

“I know,” with a sobbing breath.

“Is there anything you would like to do first?”

“Visit mamma—and then Isobel. I want to see the baby; I haven’t seen him; he will comfort me.”

“God loved so that he *gave*—do you remember?”

“Yes.”

“And he loves so that he *takes*; it is the same love.”

She wept upon his shoulder; but they were very sweet tears; not one self-willed or rebellious drop among them.

XXXIX.

AFTERWARD.

It is two years since that rainy August afternoon; Julia is five years old, Kelly is "all of three," he would tell you, and Prosper is a year old; Prosper is dark like the Dekkers; Aunt Jue, with a great deal of pride would tell you that; and she verily believes that Kelly is a Kellinger, only his name and his blue eyes and yellow hair, and that she is very fond of tracing back to the Devoes.

Isobel Kellinger is fifty years old; "an old woman," she calls herself; the hair covered with the widow's cap is very white. When Annie Dekker sent her from the Pacific coast a photograph of herself, her husband, and their two year-old Prosper, she laid it away as if she would hide some memory with it, and then went to the mirror and looked at herself; white hair, the unmistakable evidence of the work of years in chin, cheek, and brow, and then she went back, and with her

glasses on, gazed long at the face of Prosper Dekker's young wife; was she twenty-seven?

What a dream that had been! What a wild dream! Wilder than any in her unconscious hours!

What had hindered? Rather, who had hindered?

Suppose her life were not worth anything; he had said years ago that it was worth being born once that one might be born the second time. She was, therefore, glad that she was born. Repentance upon earth gave one a new life up in Heaven; he had said that also. She never could think of these things herself; but she could remember them. She was not sure that her intellect had grown at all in these years, but she had felt the growing of her heart.

Marietta, Aunt Marie, and Auntie Ree, as Miss Devoe was called, hopped about as lightly as ten years ago, still busied about the neglected things, still doing what other people did not love to do; she had never thought whether *she* loved to or not; had she thought, I think she would have concluded that she did love to; rather, perhaps, that she loved to have them done.

The "trouble nobody knew about," that Mrs.

Kellinger had hinted to Bel, no one knew about to this day; she herself was hardly certain, after the living of thirty years, that it was a trouble now, and still more uncertain as to whether it ever had been; it is queer about these things (or isn't it?) I wonder not if you care to know, because you do; but if it will do you any good if I tell you: she had her dream in her youth, and her dream was that she might love John Kellinger into becoming a good man; clearly his wife—his two wives had not done it; her dream was before he had married Hope Devoe, when she was a woman of thirty, sewing by the day to support herself, and help support her mother; the hope was as brief as a dream, and the awaking as if she had been rudely shaken out of sleep.

If such a thing be possible, she went through her disappointment without thinking about it.

Thirty years afterward she believed that Providence was in it. The only fragment of the dream betrayed itself by motherliness toward John Kellinger's daughter, and grandmotherliness toward sturdy little Kellinger, whose name she would never spoil by "Kelly-ing" it.

"Auntie Ree, I love you better than grand-

mamma," Kellinger boldly declared one day and got two seed cakes for it.

Prosper Dekker's letters, written monthly, and Annie's notes written weekly, were among the best things in the life of the Dekker family.

Extracts from Prosper's letters were kept for Sunday evening, when Auntie Ree and grandmamma came over to tea, and were read before the fire in winter and on the piazza in summer time.

Perez and Isobel talk of taking a journey, starting on the day of their wedding anniversary to the Pacific coast; Isobel looks forward to the sail down the Columbia River, and Perez is eager to look into Prosper's face and take him by the hand.

Grandmamma, who had never loved children, says she would travel all the way to see little Prosper and his baby sister. Miss Jue declares she would travel all the way to keep her from spoiling them after she got there.

"I am the Law in this house," she often remarks.

"People who do not understand children," wrote Prosper in one of his monthly letters, "lose a great deal, not only of earth, but of heaven, 'for of such is the kingdom of Heaven.'

"How can one who has been a child but under-

stand a child? Do we not understand what we have been through? I suppose some people (I have seen them) go *over* instead of through childhood."

Annie's half dozen sheets to Isobel were filled with the sayings of the children and notes from her husband's sermons.

"She is somebody's wife and somebody's mother, that is all she is," remarked Perez, one evening, after his wife had talked over with him her last letter.

"What more *would* you have her?" asked Isobel in astonishment.

"I would have her a lady that I would be interested in, if she were an old maid."

"She would have been interesting in that way then."

"I doubt it."

"I never can prove it to you."

"It proves itself to me that she would not. Her husband and children are only three people; they clasp hands around her and she revolves inside that limited circle; I wonder if she would have become more or less without her children?"

"Perez, you are hard! She appreciates Prosper."

"She appreciates her husband; I am not at all sure that she appreciates Prosper Dekker."

"Perhaps you think he is above any woman's appreciation," retorted Isobel, with a touch of her maiden sauciness.

As the years went on Isobel Dekker found other precious things to lay away with her two treasures: her own mother's likeness and the tiny book she had read on board the Goodspeed.

Prosper Dekker's prayer concerning her was fully answered—and answered as he asked; his "service" was blessed to her.

Janet and Ellinor visited her every summer. One summer Janet brought her husband, and every summer Ellinor brought something to talk about; Perez Dekker told his wife that Ellinor Dermot was a woman that one could not meet for an hour without becoming interested in what she thought and what she did.

She said herself that she felt that she was only a Rhizopod, but she was willing to build for the sake of the cliff.

Lizette's husband died, and she lived for her two bright-eyed boys. Isobel often wrote to her, and sent to her and to Madame Mowbray the photographs of her three children; promising Madame

that Julie should some day stand at her windows and look out into the Square. But she would not wonder what she was made for, because she was learning every day.

Isobel's English friend wrote to her that she was married, and, as Perez put it, "that was the end of her," for she never wrote again.

The story that Julie liked best was "how mamma came over the sea to be a comfort to grandpapa."

One day, twisting herself about on the music stool, Julie burst out: "Oh, mamma, may I run down in the garden to rest—between times?"

"Yes, darling, you may always rest your eyes and your fingers 'between times,' when you study and practice."

"How long, mamma?" standing seriously before her and looking up, with her father's eyes softened with her mother's expression. "Will you know when it is over?" Had not One always known when her between times of hard times or good times was "over"?

"Five minutes every half hour."

As she bounded away to answer Kellinger's call, her mother's eyes shone through tears: "Oh, my little daughter, may your between times be like your mother's—preparation for all the other times."

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